



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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BY HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

THE STRAWBERRY GIRL.

"Berries! Berries! Do you want to buy some strawberries?"

It was a beautiful August afternoon; the place was in the vicinity of the fort on what was known as "The Hook." This was Paulus Hook, and was just across the river from the city of New York, where now stands Jersey City—for it was the year 1779, and there was no city on the New Jersey side of the river as there is now.

The "Hook" proper was a long, low neck of land—or more properly speaking, sand—which reached well out into the Hudson. Between this neck of land and the mainland ran a small creek, which virtually cut the strip off, making it more of an island than isthmus, and the British had deepened the channel of this creek until it would have been impossible for an enemy to get across unless they were prepared to swim for it. Near the centre of the shore end of the "Hook" was a drawbridge, which was kept up, save when somebody wished to cross the creek.

The person crying, "Strawberries! Strawberries!" was a girl seemingly about eighteen years of age, and she stood on the mainland at a point opposite where the drawbridge was located. The girl was roughly clad, having on coarse, homespun cotton dress and rough, heavy shoes, while an old bonnet was on her head.

A British soldier over on the strip came strolling up and standing near the drawbridge, eyed the girl for a few moments and then asked: "Have you strawberries in the basket, my girl?"

"Didn't you hear me calling out that very thing?" was the retort. "Are ye deaf? I've been callin' out that I have strawberries till I'm hoarse. D'y'e want to buy any?"

"Can't say until after I see the berries," was the reply; "they may be knotty or half green and unfit to eat."

"Oh, they are fine berries, sir. Just let me cross over and I'll show ye."

"All right; I'll let the bridge down."

He suited the action to the word, and as soon as the drawbridge had been dropped into place the girl crossed to the Hook, and, taking the cover off her basket, showed the soldier that she had some nice strawberries indeed.

"There; didn't I tell ye they were nice, ripe berries?" she asked, triumphantly. "How many d'y'e want?"

"What are they worth?"

"Two shillings a quart, sir."

"All right; I'll take a quart."

The berries were in quart baskets, and the girl handed the soldier one, and received her two shillings in silver.

"Thank ye, sir," she said, courtesying; "and now, may I go on over there and sell the rest of my berries?"

"Oh, yes; go ahead!" was the careless reply. "The boys'll be glad of a chance to get some nice berries."

"Oh, thank ye, sir."

Again the girl courtesied, and then she hastened forward, clambering over the two entrenchments and soon she was within the fort itself.

The soldiers, of whom there were seemingly four or five hundred, were scattered about, smoking, talking and playing cards. They were taking things very easy, indeed, but the appearance of the girl attracted their attention in an instant.

"Hello!"

"Jove! a girl!"

"Who is she?"

"Where did she come from?"

Such were a few of the exclamations, and one man, an officer, stepped forward and asked, somewhat sternly: "How did you get in here, girl?"

"The soldier at the bridge let me come, sir," was the prompt reply.

"He did, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did he do that?"

"I asked him to. Ye see, I have some nice strawberries

to sell, and he said he thought the men would be glad to buy them."

"Ah! strawberries, eh? Let me have a look at them."

The girl took off the cover of the basket and revealed the ripe, luscious-looking fruit.

"Ha! those look all right!" the officer cried. "How much a quart?"

"Two shillings, sir."

"And cheap enough. I would take two or three quarts, but that wouldn't be fair to the rest of the boys, so I will take only one. Here is the money;" and he took out a quart-basket and gave the girl a couple of shillings.

"Thank ye, sir," said the girl.

By this time a crowd of soldiers was around the girl, and every man was clamoring for some of the berries. The girl had no difficulty in selling all her stock, and received the money for all excepting one basket, which a burly, mean-looking fellow had secured, but for which he had made no offer of payment.

The girl looked at him and said: "You haven't paid me for your berries, sir."

The soldier pretended to get angry. "I did pay you!" he said, in a snarling voice, and with a defiant and threatening look at his comrades. It was plain that he thought some of them might interfere and try to make him pay the girl.

"You are mistaken, sir," the girl said, firmly; "you did not pay me."

"What's that!" the fellow cried. "Do you mean to say I lie?" and he glared at the girl in a way that he supposed would terrify her.

The look did not have that effect, however; at any rate, if the girl was frightened she did not show it.

"I don't mean to say that you lie," she said, quietly, "but I do say that you haven't paid me; and if you are not going to do so, please give me my berries and I will sell them to some other gentleman."

"Give you back the berries? I guess not!" with a sneering laugh. "No, sirree! these are my berries, and I hardly think you will get to sell them over again."

"They are not your berries until after you have paid for them."

"But I tell you I have paid for them!"

The girl looked at the other soldiers in an appealing manner. "I appeal to you, gentlemen," she said; "he has not paid me, and I trust that you won't stand by and see a poor girl robbed."

"What's that you say?—robbed!" almost shouted the soldier. "Look here, girl, it's lucky for you that you are a girl, or you would feel the weight of my fist!" and

he shook it in her face. "And as for the other men here they won't interfere," he added; "or, if they do, it won't be good for them."

"Oh, I understand," said the girl, calmly; "you are one of those, what is it they call them? Ah, yes, bullies. You are one of those fellows who commit all kinds of mean things and no one dares interfere for fear of getting a beating. Is that it?"

"See here, girl, don't get too saucy!" threatened the bully; "I won't stand it, even from a girl."

"Oh, I suppose you feel that it would be safe for you to attack a girl!" the strawberry peddler said, in scornful accents. "You are brave, I must say!"

"Pay her for the berries, Collins," said one soldier, a handsome fellow of perhaps twenty-four years.

"You mind your own business, Haroldson!" was the snarling reply. "It is none of your affairs whether I pay for them or not; and if you stick your nose in here you will get it pulled!"

The young man addressed as Haroldson flushed angrily and was on the point of making a sharp reply when the girl interposed.

"Thank ye for your kind words, sir," she said; "but I don't want to get any one in trouble on my account. Don't say anything more. I'll attend to the matter myself, and will settle it to my own satisfaction unaided." Then she turned and faced the bully. "Pay me for those berries!" she said, in a stern voice. Indeed, so stern and threatening did her voice sound that the soldiers stared at her in surprise.

Collins, the bully, was surprised, and he stared at the girl for a few moments in open-mouthed amazement. Then he said: "What is that you say? Pay for the berries?"

"Yes; pay me!"

"I did pay you."

"You did not. You just admitted as much to the other gentleman, and I want my money—or the berries."

"Well, you'll get neither!" with a leer. "And I'll say that I think the boys are fools to throw away money for things that they can have without pay!"

"Oh, you do, do you?"

"Yes."

"But they could not have them without pay."

"Oh, yes, they could," with a laugh; "look at me. I have the berries, and, as you say, I have not paid for them."

"But you will."

"But I won't!"

"Then you will never have the pleasure of eating tr

berries!" The girl spoke calmly and quietly, but decidedly. The other soldiers stood around, silent, but listening and watching with interest. They began to think the country girl was about as queer a girl as they had ever seen, and as courageous a one.

Collins laughed scornfully. "I'll never have the pleasure of eating the berries, you say?" he remarked. "Well, I'll show you that you are mistaken;" and he started to take a berry out, with the evident intention of eating it.

He did not succeed, however, for the girl took a couple of steps forward, and, striking the bottom of the basket with her hand, sent the contents flying in every direction. The majority went straight up, of course, and they came showering down upon the head of the bully like hailstones of a red hue.

A curse escaped the lips of the bully. "You she-fiend!" he cried. "You petticoated termagant, I'll give you a taste of my fist for that, even though you are a woman!" And the coward struck out at the girl's face.

A cry of disapproval and anger went up from the other soldiers, but their fears for the safety of the girl were groundless, for, to their surprise, she threw her head to one side, out of the way of Collins' fist, which went over her shoulder, and then, spat! her fist struck the cowardly soldier full between the eyes, knocking him down as if he had been struck with a sledge-hammer.

It was a wonderful blow—would have been for a man, indeed, and the spectators were for a moment dumb with amazement. Then their admiration and delight were given vent to in exclamations.

"Great Guns!"

"What a blow!"

"And from a girl, too!"

"It was beautiful!"

"It was just what he deserved!"

"But how did she do it?"

Collins had been temporarily dazed by the blow, and the shock of the fall, and lay on the ground blinking up at the sky after the fashion of an owl in the light, but he could soon be up again, and the soldier who had remonstrated with him before stepped to the girl's side.

"You had better go, miss," he said; "he'll be on his feet again in a moment and he will be crazy. There is no telling what he may do."

"How many men are there of you here?" asked the girl firmly.

"Oh, there's five hundred of us, I guess."

"Well, then, I think that ought to be a sufficient number to keep him from harming me."

"I know, miss; but he's our comrade, you know. We

have to be with him all the time, and he is a bad man to have to be around when he is at odds with you. It will be best for you to go, now, before he gets up."

But the girl shook her head. "No, I won't go until I get good and ready!" she said, determinedly. "If you men won't take this coward in hand and teach him a lesson, I will do it myself. I will stay right here; and if he attacks me again, I will give him such a thrashing as he never had in all his life, and I guess that after he has been thrashed by a girl he won't have the courage to stand up before you men any more."

"I know, but you can't do anything with him, miss," protested Haroldson; "it was a chance blow you struck him. He wasn't expecting anything of the kind and was not prepared for it. He will hurt you, sure, if you stay here."

"I'll risk it—and it was no chance blow, either. My father always told me to take care of myself, and I think I can do it without any help, either."

An exclamation of impatience escaped the lips of the good-hearted redcoat, and he glanced around and saw Collins just clambering to his feet. He turned again to the girl: "Run!" he said, in a low tone. "Run, and I will keep him back, even if I have to fight a duel with him afterward for interfering with him."

But the girl made no move toward leaving. "Thank you," she said, "but I'll stay and attend to him myself. Just stand aside so I can see him."

The soldier reluctantly obeyed, and then Collins caught sight of the girl who had disgraced him before his comrades. A snarl of terrible rage escaped him.

"Ah, there you are, you hussy!" he cried. "Now I shall just about kill you, girl though you are! No one, man or woman, shall strike Ezra Collins and not be made pay for it!"

Then he rushed toward the girl, much after the fashion of a mad bull dashing at a red flag.

CHAPTER II.

WHO THE STRAWBERRY GIRL WAS.

A murmur of disapproval and anger went up from the soldiers, and several made a move as if to interfere; but they were not quick enough—and it was just as well. It was quickly shown that the wonderful girl was amply able to take care of herself.

Collins, although on his feet and advancing, eager to

get revenge for the blow which he had received, was still somewhat dazed and could not see as well as he ordinarily could, and almost before he realized that he was within reach of the girl he received one blow, then another, and down he went, kerthump!

A long-drawn-out breath escaped the lips of the spectators, and then exclamations of surprise and pleasure escaped them.

"Wonderful!"

"By Jove! I believe the girl is too much for Collins!"

"She is a terror, isn't she?"

"Indeed she is!"

"Serves him right!"

It was evident that the sympathies of the soldiers were with the girl, though they could not think how it was that a girl could do what not one of them had ever been able to do; viz., get the better of Collins in a personal encounter.

Collins himself was perhaps the most surprised man of all; indeed, he was so dazed he seemed scarcely to realize what had taken place. Presently he struggled to his feet, however, and made a move to again attack the girl, muttering angrily as he did so. It was all the good it did him. He was given another dose like the two he had just received. The girl had dealt him one blow, which stopped him, and then as he stood there, his head thrown back, out shot the girl's right fist. It caught Collins on the jaw and down he dropped like a log.

This ended it. He was unconscious, and the soldiers stared from him to the girl in open-mouthed amazement. They could not understand how it was possible that a girl could strike such terrible blows.

"She is a regular Amazon!" was the thought that went through their minds.

But they were glad she had given their comrade a thrashing. He certainly deserved it, and they hoped that it would have a good effect and that henceforth he would be a more pleasant companion. Certainly he could not hope to put on any airs and try to pose as a bully after having been thrashed so handsomely by a girl.

The soldiers hastened to compliment the girl on her success. She took their compliments coolly and seemed to think she had not done anything especially noteworthy.

"I can take care of myself," she said quietly; "father always told me to do so, and I have."

"There is no doubt regarding your ability to do so," said one of the men. "Well, whenever you have some berries to sell, come and see us. We will be glad to buy."

"I shall do so, sir," was the reply; "but you had better

look after your comrade; he is insensible and needs attention."

"Oh, he will come around all right. He's tough."

Then the girl took her departure. "Did you sell all your berries?" asked the sentinel at the drawbridge, as he lowered it for her to cross over.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "I sold them all."

"They were fine berries. I enjoyed them very much. Don't forget us when you have some more to sell."

"I won't forget, sir."

"The berries were sweet, but I don't believe they were as sweet as you are," the soldier said.

"Oh, you are trying to flatter me," said the girl.

"No, I'm not; I mean it," the soldier declared; "but I can't say positively without testing the matter; let me have a kiss and then I'll know."

The girl laughed. "Oh, I couldn't think of it," she said; "I'm not giving away anything, and I'm selling strawberries, not kisses."

"I'm afraid you are cruel as well as sweet."

"Oh, no, I'm not cruel."

"I think you are. Such a handsome girl shouldn't be so stingy with her kisses."

"Oh, I won't be stingy when the right man comes along."

"That's it, eh?"

"Yes; do you blame me?"

"No, I don't blame you. But say, take a good look at me. Perhaps I may be the right man, after all."

"No, you're not," the girl laughingly replied.

"What's the matter with me. Ain't I good-looking enough?"

"Well, as to that, you are not bad-looking."

"Then what's the matter with me?"

"Your clothes don't suit me."

"My clothes don't suit you?" The redcoat was evidently surprised.

"That's what I said; your clothes don't suit me."

"What's the matter with them?"

"They're the wrong color."

"Ha!" exclaimed the redcoat. "The wrong color, eh?"

"Yes; I don't like red."

"You don't, eh?"

"No."

"What color do you like?"

"Blue."

"So that's it, eh? You're a rebel!"

"No, I'm not a rebel," the girl replied; "but I am an American, and I think our people should be free. I am only a girl, so I hope you won't be angry at my talking so plainly."

"Not I!" the redcoat, who happened to be a good-natured fellow, replied. "I admire you all the more for your grit and honesty in saying just what you feel."

"Thank you," said the girl; "I thought you were that kind of a man."

"But say, if I let you go you ought to give me at least one kiss," the soldier protested.

"I couldn't think of it; if I were to give you one you'd want a dozen."

"You seem to know something about such matters," said the redcoat. "If I were a betting man I would wager that the 'right man' has already come along. Am I not right?"

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you!" the girl replied; and then with a coquettish smile she tripped across the bridge.

"Jove! that girl's all right!" muttered the redcoat, looking after her admiringly.

Just then another one of the soldiers came strolling up and he told the sentinel about the encounter between the girl and Collins, the bully.

The sentinel was almost paralyzed with amazement. "You don't mean to tell me," he gasped, "that that girl really and truly thrashed Collins!"

"Yes, I do mean to tell you that very thing; she knocked him down three times and the third time he was insensible. Why, he hadn't come to yet when I left."

"Great guns!" the redcoat gasped. "And I teased that girl to let me kiss her. Jove! what if I tried to make her let me kiss her after she refused!"

"Well, I guess you'd got laid out!" laughed the other.

"That's right; I'm glad, now, that I'm good-natured and man enough not to want to be rude to a girl or woman."

"Yes, it was one case where it certainly paid to be a true man, old fellow," the other agreed.

"You're right. And she knocked Collins senseless? Wonderful! I would not have believed it possible."

"Neither would I if I had not seen it myself."

"Well, Collins needed the lesson."

"Yes, all the boys were glad to see him get it."

"I don't doubt it. He won't put on so many airs from now on, will he?"

"I rather think not."

"He won't be able to browbeat and bully the boys as he has been doing."

"No; if he tries that they'll threaten to send for that girl, and that will squelch him."

"I should say so."

Then the soldier went back inside the intrenchments, leaving the sentinel to ponder over what he had been told.

"Well, well," he murmured, "that beats anything I ever

heard of! The girl must be a regular Amazon. Jove! but I'm glad she thrashed Collins! Knocked senseless by a girl! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, but this is rich; it's the best joke I ever heard!"

Meantime the girl had walked swiftly onward, and was just disappearing over the brow of a hill two hundred yards distant. She walked straight onward, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and after ten minutes of this she entered some scrubby timber which was growing there in the lowlands.

She made her way through the timber a distance of a quarter of a mile or so and then came to a place where, in an opening in the timber, stood a log cabin.

Seated on a bench in front of the cabin were a man and a woman, while standing in the open doorway was a girl of about eighteen years of age. The man and woman looked like ordinary settlers of those times, but the woman was quite good-looking; while the girl, who was evidently their daughter, was really beautiful. As their eyes fell upon the approaching girl with a basket on her arm they gave utterance to exclamations of pleasure.

"There he comes now!" exclaimed the woman.

"I knew he'd get back safe!" declared the man.

"Oh, Dick—Mr. Slater!" exclaimed the girl, leaping forward and seizing the newcomer by the hand. "I—I mean we—are so glad to see you safely back again!"

"Are you, indeed?" laughed Dick Slater—for it was indeed the great scout and spy. "Well, I am glad to get back safely."

"Did you get within the intrenchments at the Hook?" asked the man.

"Yes, Mr. Lyman," replied Dick; "this disguise of mine deceived them finely, and I had no trouble in penetrating clear into the works of the enemy."

"Good!" the man exclaimed. "I am glad of that!"

"And did you learn what you wished to, Mr. Slater?" asked Jennie Lyman eagerly.

"Yes, Miss Jennie; I found out how many men they have in the garrison, and got a good look at the intrenchments; and, in fact, learned all I wished to learn."

"I am glad of that!" said Mrs. Lyman. "I feel good over it on account of the fact that I aided in the work by loaning you the dress to wear."

"That was very kind of you, Mrs. Lyman," said Dick; "and it made my scheme possible of accomplishment, when otherwise it would not have been."

Dick Slater now entered the cabin and went into a room and divested himself of the dress and donned his own suit of clothes. He was on the point of emerging from the room when he heard the sound of strange voices

outside, and paused to listen. He heard a loud, angry voice say: "We are going to search the house, sir; and if a spy is found in there it will go hard with you! We have every reason to believe that a rebel spy, disguised as a woman, is in there. Such a person was at the Hook less than an hour ago, and we think he is here!"

"Jove! it seems as if I am in for it!" thought Dick. "I wish I knew how many there are out there. It might be that I could fight my way through and make my escape; but if there is a strong force I would not wish to try it."

The next moment the tramp of many feet was heard within the cabin—in the big, front room.

CHAPTER III.

DICK A PRISONER.

Dick saw that he was in great danger, and looked around for some means of escape or for a place to hide.

At first he thought that he was cornered, that he would be caught like a rat in a trap, but suddenly he gave a start. There was a door which opened, as he found on trying it, into a shed at the back of the main cabin. He passed through into the shed, and, closing the door behind him, peered out through a crack.

He saw half a dozen soldiers standing at the rear of the house, musket in hand, ready to shoot any one who should venture forth.

Dick hardly knew what to do. He felt that he was in great danger of being captured, and to be captured was equivalent to being killed, for they would certainly hang or shoot him for a spy.

He dared not leave the shed, however, as he would certainly be shot down, so he took up his station beside the door and waited, scarcely knowing what he would do when it should open and the enemy should appear.

He decided to leave it to the impulse of the moment, when the time should come, and, as it proved, this worked first rate. Suddenly the door opened and a redcoat appeared on the threshold; and, as it happened, some one in the room he was leaving called to him and he paused and half turned to look back and make answer. This was taken advantage of by Dick, who took one step forward, and just as the fellow turned, caught him by the throat in a grip of iron. So tightly did Dick squeeze the redcoat's throat he could not utter a sound, not even so much as a gasp, and Dick pulled him through the doorway and

then closed the door with his left hand while gripping with his right.

The youth scarcely dared hope that he could succeed in doing much, for he supposed the other redcoats would also open the door and look into the shed, but he went ahead and speedily choked the redcoat into insensibility. Then he quickly removed the insensible man's coat, doffed his own and donned the garment. To exchange hats required only a moment, and then tossing the soldier into the corner, Dick opened the outside door of the shed and quickly emerged; and in a rapid, excited tone cried: "Run around to the front of the house, boys! He is trying to escape! Hurry, or he will get away!"

The ruse was successful, for the redcoats supposed the newcomer was one of their own men, and did not doubt his statement at all. They broke and ran around the house with all possible speed, and Dick ran toward the timber, about thirty yards distant. He had almost reached it when the redcoats came running back around the house, yelling wildly. They saw the fugitive, and, raising their muskets, fired. They fired in such a hurry, however, that their bullets went wide of the mark, and Dick succeeded in getting into the timber in safety.

Instantly the redcoats gave chase, and were after him like a pack of hounds after a fox. They kept yelling at a great rate, and it was easy for the fugitive to know where his enemies were.

"Just keep up the yelling," he said to himself; "that suits me first rate."

Dick had gone perhaps half a mile when he came to a little opening in the timber on the bank of a small stream. At the farther side of the opening, and right on the bank, was a log cabin. Dick did not care to go to the cabin, so he swerved aside and started to make a detour which would take him diagonally across the opening. He hadn't made his way perhaps halfway across when there came the sharp crack of a rifle and the youth felt a stinging sensation in his head, and that was the last he knew. Forward he was pitched onto his face and lay still.

The pursuing redcoats had just emerged from the edge of the timber, and as they saw the fugitive fall, a wild shout of triumph went up from them. They had not fired the shot, but they were as pleased to see the "rebel" go down as if they had done the work.

They rushed toward the body lying there so motionless, and out of the cabin stepped a tall man, dressed in an hunter's garb, and carrying a long rifle—the weapon from which the bullet had come that had laid Dick low, without doubt.

This individual reached the spot where the youth lay

soon after the redcoats reached there. "Did I kill him?" he asked.

The British soldiers regarded the man curiously. They saw a very tall, raw-boned man, with long, hooked nose and eagle eyes, dark hair, long and tangled, and a skin that looked like tanned leather. He was dressed in the skins of wild animals, cut and fastened together with a string; and on his head was a coonskin cap. Taken all in all, he was a rather picturesque character.

"Who are you?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm Lige Mullen—though folks mostly calls me 'Long Lige.'"

"Long Lige, eh?"

"Yas."

"Do you live in that cabin?"

"I don't live nowhars else; but ye hain't answered my question. Hey I killed ther youngster?"

"No, I don't think he's dead."

"I didn't aim ter kill 'im."

"You didn't?"

"No; I jes' aimed ter crease 'im, like, so ez ter stop 'im."

"Why did you do that?"

"W'y?"

"Yes."

"So's ter he'p ye fellers out er bit."

"How did you know we were coming?"

The hunter grinned. "That's easy enuff," was the reply; "ef I sees er deer a-runnin' fur life, I knows that a thar's er painter, cattymount, b'ar er sumthin' arter et, don't I?"

"Well, yes, I suppose you do."

"Et wuz ther same w'en I seed the youngster a-runnin'. I knewed he wuz er rebel spy, an' I'm er loyal man. I jes' made up my min' ter stop 'im."

"I see; and you shot him."

"Yas; that is, I creased 'im."

"By 'creasing' I suppose you mean that you fired with the intention of just grazing the top of his head?"

"Thet's et kerzackly."

"Well, you did it; but I wouldn't believe any living otman could have fired such a shot intentionally."

The hunter chuckled. "Oh, thar's er heap ye've got ter l'arn yit erbout shootin' an' sich like things," he said; "mos' all the people uv this country kin shoot like that, an' thet's ther reason et's so hard fur ye ter git ther metter uv ther Americans."

"Perhaps you are right."

"Oh, there hain't no 'p'raps' erbout et. Et's so."

"How long will it be before this fellow comes to?"

"Hard tellin'; mebby five minutes, mebby fifteen."

"Supposing we take him over to your cabin and keep him there till he comes to?"

"Ye kin ef ye wants ter."

Four of the redcoats lifted the insensible youth and bore him to the cabin and into it. They placed him in a bunk at one side, and then bathed his face with cold water. Dick soon came to, and, opening his eyes, looked around him.

"Where am I?" he murmured. "And—what's the matter with my head?"

"You bumped it against a bullet," was the reply, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, I remember now," said Dick; "I was running, and heard a shot and felt a pain in my head; that's all I remember until the present."

"Exactly; well, do you feel strong enough to walk?"

"I guess so. But who shot me?"

He glanced inquiringly about him as he spoke, and when his eyes fell upon the tall hunter a look of intelligence flashed into them. "You did it!" he exclaimed.

The man grinned and bowed awkwardly. "I'm ther verry feller whut done et, young feller!" he said. "An' ef I do say et myself, et wuz ez purty er shot ez I ever seed."

"You mean to say that you fired with the intention of creasing me?"

"Thet's jes' whut I do mean ter say, an' et's ther trooth."

"All right; that saves your life."

Dick spoke calmly, but the hunter and the redcoats stared at him in amazement. "What do you mean?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Just what I say. Had that fellow shot at me with the intention of killing me, I should have killed him; but as he did not do that, I shall be easier on him than I would otherwise have been."

The hunter chuckled as if highly amused. "Ye talk mighty big fur er rebel spy who is er pris'ner in ther han's uv ther British," he said; "I guess ye won't hurt nobuddy enny more."

"You will find out before very long, my friend."

"I'll resk et."

"Of course; you will have to risk it."

"Waal, I guess thet I'll be able ter hol' my end up with ye, young feller."

"Up with you! We must be getting back," said one of the redcoats, pulling Dick by the arm.

Dick rose to a sitting posture and then to his feet. He was somewhat dizzy, but managed to stand up. The

redcoats proceeded to tie the youth's wrists together behind his back, and then they were ready to go.

"We are much obliged to you for what you did," said one of the men, addressing Long Lige; "but for you he would likely have escaped."

"I most certainly should," said Dick; "you could never have caught me."

"Ye're welcome ter whut I done," said Long Lige.

"Thank you; we won't forget it," said the redcoat.

"Nor will I," said Dick, significantly.

The tall hunter laughed. "I guess et won't do ye enny good, er me enny hurt," he said.

"Just think that way if it will do you any good, or please you," said Dick; "but I promise you I shall try to pay the debt which I owe you."

"Don't worry erbout me, young feller."

"Come along," said the redcoat, and they hustled Dick out of the cabin.

They made their way across the open space, the hunter standing in the open doorway and watching them out of sight. It was half an hour's walk to the cabin of the Lymans, and when the redcoats got there, bringing their prisoner, their comrades were delighted.

"So you got him, did you?" cried the leader of the redcoats, who wore the uniform of a captain.

"Yes, we got him."

"How did you manage it? I didn't think you would be able to catch him."

"We would not have caught him, but a hunter who calls himself 'Long Lige' brought the spy down by creasing him; and we were enabled to make him a prisoner."

"You certainly would not have done so otherwise," said Dick, quietly.

"Well, it doesn't matter about that; we have you, and that is all we care about. How it was done cuts no figure. You are our prisoner, and I think before many hours roll by you will be dancing at the end of a rope, with nothing under your feet but thin air."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Dick, quietly.

Dick saw that the Lymans were greatly distressed on account of his capture. Mr. and Mrs. Lyman looked worried, while there was a look of deep sorrow on the face of Jennie.

The leader of the redcoats now turned and looked severely at the three. "I hardly know what to do with you people," he said; "you have lent aid and assistance to a rebel spy, and that is a serious offense; but—"

"You are mistaken, sir," interrupted Dick; "I do not wish to see harm come to innocent people on my account."

They knew nothing of my presence here when you folks came."

The captain looked incredulous. "That will do for you to say," he said, "but as for us believing it—that is another matter."

"It is the truth I am telling you," insisted Dick; "and you will be doing these good people an injustice if you lay this up against them. They knew nothing about me, and are innocent of any collusion with me."

"I won't say that I believe you," said the redcoat, "but as we have no place to keep prisoners, over at the Hook, we will not bother them just now." Then he turned toward Mr. Lyman and said, threateningly: "You had better be very careful in future, sir! If you offer aid to another rebel it will go hard with you!"

"I have no intention of doing anything of the kind," said Mr. Lyman.

"See to it that you don't render them any assistance in the future!"

Then the officer turned to his men. "We will return to the Hook," he said; "we have captured the spy, so have done well. Take charge of him, a couple of you, and we will be off."

Two of the redcoats seized hold of Dick, one by either arm, and they marched away in the direction of the Hook, from which place he had come little more than an hour before.

They were watched out of sight by the Lymans, and then Mr. Lyman said: "That is too bad! I was in hopes that Dick had escaped."

"I hoped so," said Mrs. Lyman; "and I thought that he would escape, after he succeeded in getting away from here."

"He would have escaped if it hadn't been for Lige Mul-len," said Jennie; "the big coward!—to coolly shoot Dick down in that fashion!"

"Lige is a strong king's man," said Mr. Lyman.

"Yes; you know he has threatened to shoot you, because you were not a king's man," remarked Mrs. Lyman.

"Yes, and he is just mean enough to do it, too, father!" said Jennie. "You had better be careful and keep a sharp lookout for him after this."

It did not take the party of redcoats long to reach the Hook, and their arrival, with Dick in their midst, a prisoner, was hailed with delight. Collins, the man who had been thrashed by Dick, when the youth was disguised as a girl strawberry peddler, was perhaps the best-pleased man in the garrison. It was really due to him that Dick had been captured, too, for when he had come to, after Dick had gone, he had declared that no woman living could

he had received, and that the supposed girl was in disguise. The others had hooted at this first, but the more they thought about it the more they thought that there might be something in it. They were well aware that not one of them could have done what the supposed girl had done with seeming ease, and when they came to look at the matter with a common-sense view it did seem unreasonable to think that a girl could have knocked the bully of the garrison senseless.

So a party had been made up, and, under the command of a captain, had hastened away in pursuit of the berry peddler. They had not seen Dick go to the home of the Lymans, but they knew where the house was, and thought it likely the supposed girl would be found there; so had headed in the direction, with the results we have seen.

Dick was at once taken before the commander of the garrison. The officer glared at the youth, fiercely, evidently thinking to intimidate him. In this he did not succeed, however, as may well be supposed; it took a great deal more than looks to intimidate Dick Slater.

"So, we have you now, you rebel spy!" the officer cried. "I am not a rebel spy," replied Dick, calmly.

"Don't dispute my word! You are a rebel spy! I say that you are!"

Evidently the officer was one who did not brook opposition.

"Well, say what you please," said Dick, quietly; "that does not make it true, however."

"What! Do you dare tell me I lie?" roared the officer.

"Oh, I don't say you lie. I simply say that you are mistaken."

"But I know that I am not!"

"You don't know it; you simply think that you know it."

"What! what! Why, you are the sauciest young scoundrel that ever I saw in my life!"

"I must insist on telling the truth," said Dick, calmly. "I can't afford to let you think I am a rebel spy when I am not; for I have no desire to lose my life just yet a while."

"You are a spy, just the same; and you were in this encampment an hour ago, disguised as a girl. Deny it if you dare!"

"Of course I deny it," said Dick; "I was not here. You are mistaken, I assure you."

"I am not mistaken! You were here, and you are a spy! Of course, you would deny it."

"Certainly; and I do deny it."

"It will do you no good; you might as well tell the truth and acknowledge that you are a rebel spy."

Dick smiled. "I shall hardly do anything of the kind," he said.

"Humph! What is your name?"

"George Harris."

"How long have you borne that name?"

"All my life."

"All of one minute, I should say."

"You would say wrong."

"Bah! Where do you live?"

"About four miles from here."

"You were found in a shed at the rear of the house of a family of rebels. What were you doing there?"

"I was talking to the people when your men appeared, and I was afraid of them and went in the shed to hide from them."

"Why should you be afraid of them if you were not a rebel and spy?"

"Because I have heard a great many stories of the cruelty of the soldiers, and I was afraid they might hurt me."

"So you got in your work first, and almost choked one of the men to death, and garbing yourself in his coat and hat you made a break; and by a ruse succeeded in getting away, temporarily."

Dick nodded. "Yes, I acknowledge that," he said; "I did it in self-defense. I didn't know what your men might take it into their heads to do."

"That is a very good story, young man, but I don't believe a word of it. You are a rebel spy, and you were here in this place disguised as a girl fruit peddler; and now that I have got you I'm going to hold onto you."

"I don't blame you for holding onto me for a while," said Dick; "but as soon as it shown that I am not a spy, I hope you will do the right thing and set me free."

"Oh, I'll do that!" with a sneering smile. "When it is shown that you are not a rebel or spy."

At this moment an orderly appeared and said: "Collins is here, sir."

"Show him in!" ordered the commander.

The next moment the fellow whom Dick had given such a thrashing appeared. The commander motioned toward Dick.

"Take a good look at him, Collins," he said, "and tell me if you think he is the fellow who was here a short time ago, disguised as a girl fruit peddler."

Collins stepped forward and peered into Dick's face for at least half a minute, Dick meeting the fellow's gaze unflinchingly.

"Well?" said the commander, impatiently.

"It's him, all right, sir!" Collins declared.

"You are sure of it, eh?"

"Yes; I would be willing to swear to it."

"Then you are willing to swear to a lie!" said Dick, promptly.

A fierce growl of rage escaped the lips of Collins, and he glared at the youth with the look of a fiend; but, of course, he did not dare strike or lay hands on him.

"I'll see you hung or shot!" he said fiercely.

"I don't think you will, friend Collins," was the quiet reply.

"You'll see!"

"That is all, Collins," said the commander; "you may go."

Collins saluted and withdrew, flashing a look of malignant triumph at Dick as he went.

The youth merely gave the fellow a contemptuous smile, which angered him, but he did not dare say anything more.

"Take the prisoner and confine him in the prison!" ordered the commander, and the two soldiers who had conducted Dick into the officer's headquarters led him forth and across the grounds to a small, shanty-like building not far from the bay. They conducted the youth into this building and left him there, going out and fastening the door behind them.

"Well," thought Dick, "this is rather hard! Here I am, a prisoner, when I ought to be riding toward West Point with the information which the commander-in-chief wished me to secure. Well, it can't be helped. I did the best I could—and but for that scoundrel Tory, Long Lige, I would have escaped easily. I am not such of a hand for bearing ill will toward a person, or nursing a grievance, but I think I shall not rest satisfied until after I have squared my account with that fellow!"

Dick looked about him as well as he could, for it was now growing dusk, and there was no light in the room, and only one small window, which was grated, and asked himself if it was possible for him to escape. "I fear not," he thought, with a sigh; "however, I will not despair and will get out of here if such a thing is possible."

But would it be possible?

CHAPTER IV.

TOM BARNES.

Jennie Lyman was silent and preoccupied for half an hour or so after the redcoats departed, taking Dick Slater with them as a prisoner. She seemed to be thinking about

something, and presently she put on to her parents: "I am going over to

"What for?" asked her mother, in surprise.
"I want to see Tom."

"Want to see Tom?"

"Yes. Is there anything so very strange about that?"
"Well, it seems so to me, after—"

Mrs. Lyman hesitated, and Jennie looked at her and said: "After—what?"

"After you refused to marry him, as you did do, not two weeks ago!"

Jennie smiled, in rather a constrained manner. "So you think that on that account it is strange I should go to see Tom?"

"I do."

"And so do I, Jennie," said her father; "why do you wish to see him?"

The girl hesitated, and then said: "I wish to ask a favor of him."

"A favor?" in a surprised tone of voice.

"Yes."

"What favor do you want to ask at his hands?"

"I want to ask him to try to rescue Dick Slater!"

"Ah!" Both uttered the exclamation in unison, and they looked at the girl curiously.

"So that is what you want to do, is it?" asked her mother.

"Yes."

"And do you think Tom will be willing to do it?"

"If I ask him to."

"Yes; but Jennie—is it right to ask him to try to rescue Dick Slater? He will have to risk his own life in doing so, you know."

"I know that."

"What will you tell him your reason is for wishing him to rescue Dick Slater?"

The girl flushed somewhat, but replied steadily enough.

"I will tell him that I wish it because Dick Slater is a patriot, and one of the most important scouts and spies in the Continental army. Tom is a strong patriot, and he will be willing to make the attempt, I am sure."

"Has he ever met Dick Slater?"

"I don't know."

"If he has, and is aware that the young patriot is handsome, won't he suspect that you are asking him to do this because you are—well, interested in him?"

The girl shook his head. "I hardly think so," she said. "Tom is sensible, and is not jealous or suspicious, and I think he will not put such a construction on my action."

in coming to him. He will simply be glad that I brought him the information regarding Dick Slater's capture."

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Lyman, doubtfully.

"I am sure of it," said Jennie; "and even if it were otherwise, I believe he would do his best to rescue Dick, anyway."

"I don't know but you are right; Tom is a noble-hearted boy, if ever there was one."

"He is that," said Mr. Lyman; "and I think you would have done mighty well to have accepted him, Jennie. He would have made you a good husband."

"I know that, father," said the girl, "but—I don't love him, and I don't think it would be right to marry a man when you don't love him."

"That would have come soon. You would have soon learned to care for him."

The girl shook her head. "I am afraid not," she said.

"Are you not afraid to go over to Tom's home alone, Jennie?" asked her mother. "It is almost dark now."

"Oh, no; I'm not afraid. It is only two miles, and I can walk it in thirty-five minutes."

"But it is a lonesome way through the timber in the darkness."

"I'll get over there before it is so very dark, and Tom will be with me when I come back."

"I hope so; but I'm not sure of it," said Mrs. Lyman.

"I am sure of it. Well, good-by, and don't worry about me. I'll be back in less than two hours, and Tom will be with me."

"You had better let father go with you, Jennie."

"No, mother; there is no need of it, and you would be afraid here all alone. I'll be all right; don't worry about me."

Then she took her departure, and set out along a winding path which led through the timber. She was a strong, healthy and active girl, and walked rapidly. She was unfamiliar with the path, so did not have to lose any time looking for the right way to go. The result was, that after about thirty-five minutes of rapid walking she came out in a field of about twenty acres. Near the centre of the field was a good-sized log house and some outbuildings.

"I hope that Tom is at home!" thought Jennie, as she walked toward the house. In reaching the house it was necessary for her to pass near the stable; and as she came near it a young man, just visible in the faint light of the newly risen moon, stepped out and came face to face with her.

"What! You, Jennie?" the young man exclaimed, and there was a joyous ring to his voice.

"Yes, it is I, Tom," was the reply.

"Why are you here so late, Jennie—anything wrong at home?" the young man, who was indeed Tom Barnes, asked.

"No, nothing wrong at home, Tom—that is to say, there is nothing wrong with any of our folks."

"What is the matter, then, Jennie? I know something is wrong."

"Have you ever heard of Dick Slater, Tom?" asked Jennie.

"Oh, yes; he's the captain of a company of young fellow who call themselves 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, what about him, Jennie?"

"He is a prisoner in the hands of the redcoats, Tom!"

"A prisoner in the hands of the redcoats?"

"Yes."

"Where? Which redcoats?"

"Those over at the Hook."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"How did it happen?"

"I'll tell you, Tom: He came to our house two days ago and said he had come down from West Point to spy on the garrison at the Hook. He stayed at our house, and to-day, disguised in one of mother's dresses, he succeeded in getting within the works of the British, on pretence that he was a fruit peddler. He had some strawberries, and sold them to the soldiers; but he was suspected, and some of them came to our house soon after he returned from the Hook and surrounded the house. But Dick managed to get away from them and ran away through the timber. He would have escaped easily enough had it not been for Long Lige, who dropped him senseless with a rifle bullet, which just creased him, and the redcoats captured him."

"Long Lige is a strong Tory," said Tom; "and Dick Slater, he is a prisoner at the Hook, now, you say?"

"Yes."

"And what do you want of me, Jennie?"

"I want you to try to rescue him, Tom."

The young man was silent for a few moments, and then he said: "It will be a dangerous thing to do, Jennie."

"I know it, Tom; but I know, too, that you are brave, and I believe that if anybody can rescue him, you can."

"Thank you, Jennie, for your good opinion of me."

There was strong feeling in the young man's tone.

"I know you are brave, Tom," the girl went on, "and if you can rescue Dick Slater you will be doing a great thing for the cause of Liberty, I know; for Dick had secured some valuable information which, if he could have

taken it to the commander-in-chief, would have been used to good advantage."

Again Tom was silent for a few moments, and then he said: "This young man, Dick Slater—is he—is he—handsome, Jennie?"

There was a tremor in the young man's voice. It was evident that he suspected that Jennie had a personal interest in the affair of the patriot spy's rescue.

"Yes, he's handsome, Tom—but," in an impulsive voice, "he isn't any handsomer than you, Tom."

The young man laughed somewhat bitterly. "But it is in a different and more pleasing style that he is handsome, I judge, Jennie. Well," as the girl was about to speak, "never mind. I'll do my best to rescue him, anyway, Jennie; so you may rest easy on that score."

"Oh, Tom!" the girl cried; "I was sure you would say that! Oh, I'm so glad! and I hope you will succeed!"

"So do I, Jennie."

"When will you make the attempt?"

"To-night."

"So I supposed."

"Yes, the sooner the attempt is made, the better."

"I should think so."

"Yes; they may not delay long. They might hang or shoot him to-morrow. At any rate, they might send him over to the city, which would make the work of rescuing him much more difficult."

"Will you go back with me now, Tom?"

"Yes; just as soon as I go to the house and tell the folks what I am going to do."

"Hurry, then."

"Come to the house with me, Jennie."

"No—I'd rather not, Tom."

"Very well; just as you like."

"Don't tell them that it was I who brought you the news of the capture of Dick Slater."

"All right; if you don't want me to."

"I don't."

"Very well; wait for me. I won't be gone long."

"I'll wait."

Tom hastened to the house, and was back again in a few minutes.

"Now I'm ready," he said; "we'll not need to hurry, though, as I won't dare try to rescue him before midnight or later."

"You can stay at our house till you think it is the right time to go," said Jennie.

They did not do a great deal of talking during the walk to the girl's home. There was some constraint between them, as was only natural, when Jennie had only a short

time before refused an offer of marriage from the young man. Tom was a sensible young fellow, though, and he did not get angry at Jennie on this account. He thought just as much of her as ever, and it may be that he still cherished hopes that she might yet agree to become Mrs. Barnes.

They were about three-quarters of an hour in reaching the Lyman home, and Tom was given a hearty welcome by Mr. and Mrs. Lyman, both of whom liked the young man very much.

"It is going to be a very dangerous undertaking to try to rescue Dick Slater from the hands of the British," said Mr. Lyman.

"I suppose," replied Tom; "well, I'll make the attempt, anyway. Maybe I can make a success."

"I hope so."

"And so do I!" from Mrs. Lyman.

"Tom'll do it, if anybody can," said Jennie, confidently. This statement made Tom flush with pleasure, and he flashed a pleased and grateful look at Jennie. "I'll do my best, you may be sure," he said, simply.

He remained at the Lyman home till ten o'clock, and then, after shaking hands with the three, and bidding them good-by, while they wished him good luck, he took his departure.

A walk of twenty minutes brought him to the top of a hill from which point the lights within the works on the Hook were visible. He paused and looked in that direction a few moments.

"Well, my work is there, all cut out for me," he said to himself, presently; "I might as well get to work."

CHAPTER V.

THE RESCUE.

Tom struck out down the slope, but he didn't go straight toward the fort. Instead, he made a wide detour and struck the river at a point nearly a mile north from the Hook. The shore of the river made a deep curve to the westward here, and when the young man reached the river he was almost facing toward the north.

Tom was quite familiar with this locality, and he did not hesitate. Having struck the river, he walked along the shore until he came to a little cabin nestling right down almost on the water's edge. The cabin was more cave than aught else, for it was dug into the steep bank and the front only was of logs. A person unaware of the presence of the

cabin would not have noticed it in passing along on the top of the river bank. Nor was it easy to be seen from the river, as there were small trees and shrubs growing in front of and all around it. Reaching this cabin Tom knocked on the door.

"Come in!" called out a voice, and Tom pushed the door open and entered.

"How air ye, Tom?" the occupant of the cabin, a grizzled old fisherman, called out.

"Pretty well; how are you, Joe?" replied the youth, as he extended his hand, the other taking it and shaking it heartily.

"Oh, so-so, my boy; jes' so-so. Thar hain't much doin' in ther fishin' line nowadays."

"I should think it would be good pay, Joe," the youth declared; "won't the redcoats buy your fish?"

"Oh, yes; they buys 'em—but ther trubble is ter ketch ther fish."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas."

"Won't the fish bite?"

"Not like they uster."

"Why is that?"

"Thar's too menny boats an' ships a-skootin' aroun' through ther water, my boy, thet's w'at's ther trubble."

"Oh, that's it; there are too many redcoats in these waters, eh?"

"Yas," with a grin; "ther fish isafeerd uv 'em."

Then the old fisherman looked at Tom curiously. "Wat ye doin' away up heer at this time uv ther night, Tom?" he asked.

The youth smiled. "Perhaps I want to go fishing with ou," he replied.

"Waal, ye kin do thet ef ye wanter," was the reply; "but kinder think thet thar is somethin' else in ther win', er e wouldn't be heer at this time uv ther night."

Tom laughed. "You are right about that, Joe. I am ere on more serious business than fishing."

"I thort so. W'at is ther bizness?"

"I'll tell you: The British down on the Hook have a patriot a prisoner, and I am going to try to rescue him."

The old man nodded. "I knowed somethin' wuz up," he declared. "But who is ther patriot?"

"Have you ever heard of Dick Slater, Joe?"

"Hev I? Waal, I ruther guess I hev! I've seen 'im, too—rowed 'im ercross ther river onct. He's ther feller they calls 'The Champeen Spy uv ther Revolution.'"

"You are right; well, I'm glad you know him. I've never met him, but I've heard a great deal about him, and his band of 'Liberty Boys' as they are called."

"Yas; they're er brave lot uv young fellers."

"I guess there isn't any doubt about that."

"An' Dick is er pris'ner, ye say, down at ther Hook?"

"Yes."

"When wuz he captoored?"

"To-day."

"Ter-day, eh?"

"Yes."

"How did et happen?"

Tom told him the story of Dick's capture, as it had been told to him by Jennie while they were walking from his home to hers.

"So thet wuz ther way uv et, eh?" as Tom finished.

"Yes."

"Thet wuz er mean trick uv Long Lige's," with a grunt of disapproval.

"So it was. The redcoats would not have captured Dick had it not been for Long Lige."

"An' ye air goin' ter try ter risgy Dick Slater?"

"Yes."

The old man shook his head, slowly and dubiously. "Et'll be er hard thing ter do," he said.

Tom nodded. "I don't doubt that; but he must be rescued, if such a thing is possible."

"Yer right; he is too vallerable ter ther great cause uv Liberty fur ter be left ter be shot er hung by ther red-coats."

"Just so; and I want you to help me rescue him, Joe."

"I'm ready ter do w'atever I kin," was the prompt reply.

"Well, I think you can do a good deal to help me."

"Wat kin I do?"

"Well, in the first place, you can furnish a boat, can't you?"

"Yas."

"Well, that will be a big help."

"Ye air goin' ter try ter git ter ther Hook from ther water side, eh?"

"Yes; I think that safest and best."

"I dunno but yer right."

"You have done a good deal of fishing down around the Hook, haven't you, Joe?"

"Yes, quite er good deal."

"Then you are familiar with the lay of the land—or water, rather, and will know just which way to go."

"Yas, I kin put ye right up ag'inst ther Hook at enny p'int you wants."

"That is good; that will help me a great deal."

"I've be'n down aroun' thar er good deal lately," went on Joe, "an' I know jes' whar ther prizzen is located. Et hez

be'n used mos'ly fur ter keep soldiers in w'at went over ther city an' come back drunk."

"I know; it has been used as a guard house."

"Yas; I've heerd ther fellers in thar a-singin' an' yellin' like all git out."

"Good! You can put me ashore right near this guard house, then, and that will make the matter much easier and simpler than it would otherwise have been."

"W'en d'ye wanter start?"

"How long does it take to row down there?"

"Oh, not long; ten or fifteen minnets, I guess."

"Well, we won't start till after midnight."

"I shouldn't think et would be a good idee ter git thar too airily."

"No; we want to wait till all are asleep save the sentinels; then they are all we will have to look out for."

"Thet's right."

The two remained in the cabin and talked till it was past midnight, and then they went out and got into a boat, and the old fisherman took the oars and rowed slowly and silently away, down the river.

There was a moon, but it was quite cloudy, so the moon did not give much light; and even so large an object as a boat could not be seen more than a few yards distant. There was not much danger that they would be discovered, so long as they remained in the boat; it was after he had gone ashore that Tom would have to look out.

He was prepared to do this, however, and as soon as they were able to locate the whereabouts of the guard house, Joe pulled cautiously ashore and stopped only when the boat's nose ran up on the sand.

Tom did not at once go ashore, but both sat perfectly still and listened for several minutes. They could hear the tramp-tramp of the sentinel's feet as he marched slowly backward and forward on his beat, and then, seizing the time when the sentinel was farthest away, Tom quickly but cautiously and silently made his way to the shore.

Here, crouching on the sand, he waited till the sentinel had approached and gone away again, and then he crept toward the guard house, the outlines of which could be seen a short distance away. He reached this and made his way cautiously around to the front where the door was. He heard the sentinel coming, but feeling sure that the shadow of the building would make it impossible for the redcoat to see him, he held his ground and did not move.

The sentinel approached almost to the door and then turned and started back. Tom had feared that he would be discovered, after all, and a long breath of relief escaped him as the sentinel started away again. As soon as the

redcoat was far enough away so as to make it safe to do so, Tom tried the guard house door. It was locked. Of course this was to be expected; still Tom had hoped that it might be possible that the door had been left unlocked. What should he do now?

Tom pondered the situation. Undoubtedly the sentinel had the key of the guard house, he thought; then the one thing to do was to secure the key. But how was he to do it? This was new business to Tom. For Dick Slater the problem would have presented no great difficulties. To Tom it presented a number. He was a brave and determined youth, however, and was determined that he would rescue Dick Slater if such a thing was possible. He decided to attack the sentinel, and nerved himself for the ordeal. He realized that it was a very dangerous thing to do, for one cry from the sentinel would arouse the entire garrison and bring the soldiers of the king buzzing around his ears. He must not give the man a chance to cry out.

But how was he to help himself? He decided that the best way would be to knock him senseless, which feat he felt that he might be able to accomplish. Drawing his pistol out of his belt, Tom took hold of the barrel, and gripping it firmly, waited for his intended victim to return. The butt of the pistol was almost wholly iron, and a blow on the head with it would, the youth was sure, knock the man senseless.

Presently he heard the footsteps of the sentinel. Louder and louder they sounded, as the redcoat came closer and closer, and crouching against the side of the guard house, Tom waited. At last the sentinel's form could be seen dimly outlined against the background of the sky. He was within ten feet of the guard house and then he paused and turned. As he started to walk away Tom walked forward quickly and silently, stepping on his tiptoes, and he was quickly within reach of his intended victim. It was no business for Tom, but he did not hesitate. Setting his teeth he drew back and then struck the sentinel on the head with terrible force.

The man dropped in his tracks, and did not so much as utter a groan. Tom was astonished by his success, for he had feared that the fellow would cry out, but he did not lose a moment congratulating himself on his good fortune. He was there for business, and he quickly dropped on his knees beside the still form and began feeling the man's pockets. Soon his fingers came in contact with a large, iron key, and drawing this forth the youth stepped quickly to the guard house door. He inserted the key in the lock and tried it. It turned, there was a click, and he knew that the door was unlocked.

"Good!" thought the youth; "I have had splendid

so far." Then he opened the door and stood for a moment trying to pierce the thick darkness with his gaze.

"Are you here, Dick Slater?" he asked, in a shrill whisper.

"Yes, yes!" came back the reply, in an eager whisper. "I'm right over here. This way!"

Tom made his way slowly and carefully in the direction from which the sound of the voice had come, and presently he felt some one who was lying on a cot or bunk built against the wall.

"Is this you, Dick?" Tom asked.

"Yes; but who are you?"

"No one you know; but a friend, nevertheless. I have come to free you."

"Good! Have you a knife?"

"Yes."

"Then cut the rope binding my arms."

Tom drew a knife from his belt and feeling about till he located the rope in question, he cut it, being careful not to cut the prisoner's wrists.

"Thank goodness, I am free from my bonds, at any rate!" said Dick Slater in a whisper. "But now the next thing is to get away from here."

"Yes; and if you are ready we had better be getting away, too!" whispered Tom. "The alarm may be given at any moment."

"Where is the sentinel who was on guard over the prison?"

"He's lying out there on the ground. I thumped him on the head with the butt of my pistol."

"Good! then let's get out of here. How are we to get away?"

"I have a friend and a boat out here; if we can get into the boat before the alarm is sounded, I think we can get safely away."

"Very well; you lead the way and I will follow."

Tom obeyed, and they were soon out of the building and stealing toward the boat. They had almost reached it when on the air rose a wild yell, followed by the report of a musket shot.

The fact that the prisoner was making his escape had, in some manner, been discovered.

"Here's the boat; into it, quick!" exclaimed Tom.

Dick obeyed, and scrambled into the boat, Tom following, and giving the boat a shove as he did so. The old fisherman bent to the oars and the boat moved away just as the dark forms of a hundred redcoats were seen running toward the spot.

CHAPTER VI.

PURSUED.

"Pull, Joe; pull with all your might!" exclaimed Tom.

The old fisherman made no reply, but he worked with all his energy and drew rapidly away from the Hook.

Crash! Roar! The redcoats had fired a volley, but while the bullets whistled past, and one or two struck the boat, neither of the inmates was hit and the boat continued to make rapid progress through the water.

"Have they any boats?" asked Tom.

"Oh, yas, they hev three er four," replied Joe; "they'll be arter us mighty quick."

That he spoke truly was soon proven, for the sound of oars splashing was heard, and the shouts of the soldiers.

"They're coming now!" said Tom.

"I guess you are right," agreed Dick.

"Do you think you can keep them from catching up with us, Joe?" Tom asked.

"I dunno; but I think I kin."

"Let me at the oars; I am strong and an expert rower," said Dick.

"No; I kin row ez fast ez ye kin, I think," replied the old fisherman, "an' we'd lose time changin'. We on'y hev er mile ter go, an' I kin row that fur without gittin' much tired."

The old man kept at it with great vigor and energy. He was strong, even though a man sixty years old, at least. His life had made him healthy and strong, and being constantly at work he was tough and quite equal to the task of rowing a mile at top speed.

The redcoats were coming rapidly, however, and although it could not be possible that they could see the fugitives yet they kept on their track and were even drawing nearer and nearer.

It did not take long to row the mile, and soon the boat's prow struck the shore at a point right below where the fisherman's cabin stood.

"Jump out, quick!" the man said. "We hain't got much time ter spare."

The three leaped ashore, and the old man tied the painter to a stake driven in the ground, after which he led the way up the bank.

"We'll take refuge in the timber," said Tom, as they reached the door of the cabin; "we won't go away, though, until after the redcoats have come and gone, for if they should try to harm you, Joe, we would want to help you out."

"Oh, they won't bother me," the man said, confidently; "don' ye boys be afeerd uv that."

"Well, we'll wait, anyway," said Dick. "Then he and Tom bounded up the bank and stationed themselves behind trees, while Joe entered his cabin, and, closing the door, threw himself down in his bunk and lay still.

"I'll jes' purten' that I'm ersleep w'en they come," he said to himself; "an' I don't think they'll suspishun ennything."

It was not long before he heard footsteps, and then there was a knock on his door. The old fisherman made no reply. He would wait and make them think he had been asleep. Then if they accused him of having aided in the escape of the prisoner he could deny it, and they could not prove to the contrary.

There was a short silence, and then there came another knock on the door. Still Joe remained silent. Again there was a knock and a loud, angry voice called out: "Open the door, you lazy fishermonger! Open up, I tell you!"

Joe thought it about time to answer, so he called out, in a tone of simulated drowsiness: "Well! Who's that?"

"You know well enough who is here, you scoundrel!" was the reply. "Open this door before we break it down!"

The old fisherman got up out of the bunk and went and opened the door, whereat four or five redcoats rushed into the room.

"Where is he?" cried one. "Where is he? It won't do him any good to try to get away! We'll shoot him dead before we'll let him escape!"

"W'at in the worl' air ye talkin' erbout?" asked Joe, who blinked as the light of the lantern which one of the redcoats carried was flashed in his face.

"You know what we are talking about! Where is the prisoner?"

"W'at pris'ner?"

"The rebel spy."

"W'at rebel spy?"

"You know very well. The rebel spy you just rescued from off the Hook, where we had him in the guard house."

Old Joe simulated sleepy surprise very well indeed. "Ye mus' be crazy!" he said, shaking his head. "I don't know w'at ye air talkin' erbout."

"You lie, you fisherman dog!" roared the leader of the redcoats. "You have just got back from the Hook, and you know it!"

"I dunno ennythin' uv ther kin'," was the reply; "an' I'll tell ye that I don't like ter be tol' that I'm er liar w'en I hain't. I hain't be'n outer this heer cabin sence eight o'clock, so how could I hev be'n down ter ther Hook?"

"That story won't do, Joe," the leader said, but in a

more moderate tone; "you rescued the prisoner, and he is here somewhere. We are going to find him, rest assured of that!"

"Ef ye fin' enny rebel heer ye kin hang me on ther spot!" said Joe, promptly. "I dunno nothin'" erbout w'at ye air talkin' erbout."

The redcoats at once began searching the cabin. It did not take long, for there were only two rooms, both small, and it was soon seen that there was no one hidden anywhere about.

"W'at'd I tell ye?" remarked Joe. "Ye air on the wrong tack, altogether. Ther prisoner hain't ennywhar aroun' heer. He's gone in some other direckshun, an' while ye wuz a-rowin' up heer on er wil' goose chase he wuz gittin' erway in some other direckshun."

"I don't believe it!" the redcoat leader cried. "I am confident that you rescued that prisoner—or, at least, that you helped to do it, and as he isn't in the cabin he must have taken to the timber."

"Ye air wrong," said Joe; "I don't know nothin' erbout ther feller ye air talkin' erbout. In fact, I didn't know ye hed er rebel pris'ner."

"Out of doors in a hurry, boys, and beat the timber in every direction!" ordered the leader. "We may be able to catch the fellow even yet."

The men hastened out and made their way up the embankment. Of course, Dick and Tom heard them coming and immediately drew back into the timber. As the redcoats advanced the youths retreated, and as both were good woodsmen and understood this sort of work much better than the redcoats did, they had no difficulty in keeping out of the way of their enemies, and at last, when the British soldiers gave up the search and went back to the cabin on the river bank, the youths followed closely. Indeed, the redcoats would have been amazed had they known how nearly at hand were the youths they were looking for.

The redcoats went back to the cabin and the officer, who learned that they had seen nothing of the escaped prisoner, was angry and disappointed.

"All right," he said, turning and shaking his finger menacingly at the old fisherman; "all right. You have done your work well, and the rebel has made his escape, but you want to look out! We shall keep our eyes on you, and sooner or later we shall catch you in something that will be enough to cause us to shoot or hang you!"

"I dunno w'at ye air talkin' erbout," said Joe, calmly.

"That's all right; you know, well enough, and I warn you that it will go hard with you if you are again caught in rendering aid to rebels!"

"Ye talk ez ef ye hed alreddy caught me doin' somethin' iv thet kin'."

"And so we have. You assisted the rebel spy to escape—I know it!"

"Ye air mistook, altogether, sir," said Joe. "I hain't be'n outer this cabin sence eight o'clock."

"Bosh! Remember what I have told you and beware!"

Then the officer told his men to come along, and led he way out of the cabin and down to the boat, into which they got, and the men rowed away down the river.

As soon as the redcoats were gone, Dick and Tom re-entered the cabin. "Well, did they try to hurt you, Joe?" asked Tom.

"No," was the reply; "they threatened me er little bit, but they didn't try ter do me enny hurt."

"Did they accuse you of having something to do in the rescue?" asked Dick.

"Yas; they said I done et, but they couldn't prove et; so they didn't darst do ennything ter me."

"Well, I am much obliged to you for what you did for wne," said Dick, earnestly.

"Don' say er word erbout et," said the fisherman. "I invuz glad uv ther chance ter he'p ye."

After some further conversation the two youths shook hands with Joe, and, bidding him good-by, took their departure. It was a walk of about three-quarters of an hour up the home of the Lymans, and when the two reached the edge of the clearing they saw that something was going on at the house. There was a light in the front room and what looked like a group of men were standing in front of the door.

"Hello! what's going on there?" exclaimed Tom, as he paused and looked in astonishment.

"I think I know what the trouble is," said Dick; "a searching party has come here to look for me. I was here this afternoon, you know, and they think that I may have helme back."

"Jove! I guess you have hit the truth of the matter."

"I am sure I have."

"What shall we do?"

"Stay away till the redcoats have gone."

"Maybe they may take it into their heads to do Mr. anwman's folks some hurt!"

"In that case we will take a hand; I don't think, though, at they will do anything of that kind."

The two were standing there, looking toward the house, conversing in half-whispers, when suddenly there was a rush of feet and they felt themselves seized by many hands.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK SETTLES WITH LONG LIGE.

Although taken by surprise, the youths fought desperately. They were determined that they would not be taken prisoners if they could help it. They fought as only men can fight when they are fighting for life and liberty.

To their surprise they found that they were holding their own—and more. Their assailants numbered four, but even though two to one the redcoats could not overcome the youths. Dick Slater was the equal of two or three ordinary men in a combat of this kind, and he fought more desperately than he might have done had it not been that the remembrance of the prison he had just escaped from was so strongly upon him. He did not want to be taken back there so soon. Tom, too, made a wonderful fight, and presently both youths succeeded in freeing themselves and leaped away.

The redcoats sprang after them and began yelling at the top of their voices, for their comrades to come to their assistance. "This way, boys!" they cried. "Here they are!"

Then they called to Dick and Tom to stop under penalty of being fired upon if they refused to obey the command. Of course, the youths did not stop, and their pursuers did fire at them; but it would have been the rankest accident had they succeeded in hitting the fugitives.

In this sort of work—running through the timber, the two were more than a match for the redcoats. They were used to it, while their pursuers were not, and could get along faster. They speedily distanced their pursuers, and finally succeeded in throwing them off the track altogether. Then they made a half circuit and approached the Lyman home from the rear. Pausing at the stable they took an observation. They could not see any of the enemy anywhere about, but were suspicious that there might be some at the edge of the clearing, watching, so they did not venture to approach the house.

They waited patiently and scarcely more than five minutes had elapsed before they saw a group of redcoats approaching the cabin. The members of the group were talking excitedly and angrily, and it was evident that they thought the fugitives had taken refuge in the Lyman house.

This was the case, and the redcoats knocked loudly on the front door, and when Mr. Lyman opened it the British soldiers entered without ceremony.

"Those two scoundrelly rebels are in here, and we are going to find them!" the leader said.

"There are no rebels here," declared Mr. Lyman. "I told

you so a while ago and you wouldn't believe me; but it turned out to be the truth, and it will be the same this time."

"I don't believe it!"

The redcoats searched the house thoroughly, but, of course, found no sign of the youths, and had to give it up, though with an ill grace.

"They are around here somewhere," the leader declared.

"They would be very foolish to come here," said Mr. Lyman.

"Nevertheless I am confident they will come here, and I am going to leave some of my men on watch to capture them when they put in an appearance."

"Very well; you can do so if you like, though it will avail you nothing, I am confident."

The redcoats withdrew, and the leader stationed seven or eight men in the vicinity of the house, after which he withdrew with the rest of the party.

Of course, Dick and Tom saw what was going on, and were too shrewd to venture to the house. They knew it would be as much as their lives were worth. Finally Dick said: "I'll tell you what I think I had better do, Tom. I think I had better sneak my horse out of the stable and take my departure. I have important information which should be taken to the commander-in-chief at the earliest possible moment, and I will leave you to tell Mr. Lyman's folks how thankful I am to them for what they have done for me."

"Very well," said Tom; "I will attend to the matter for you, if you think it best for you to go away at once."

"Well, I do think it best to do so; so I will get my horse and be off."

Dick succeeded in getting his horse out of the stable without being detected in the act by the redcoats. They had their eyes on the house, which made it possible for him to do much as he pleased at the stable without being noticed. When he had saddled his horse and was ready to go, he shook Tom's hand and thanked him for what he had done.

"You risked your life to save mine, Tom," he said, earnestly, "and I shall not forget it. If ever the time comes that I can do you a favor, you may rest assured I will do it!"

"Oh, that's all right," replied Tom; "I did what I did to please Jennie. She came over to our house and got me to promise to try to rescue you."

"Well, I'm glad she did, Tom; and you must express to her my especial thanks, and tell her that I am very, very grateful to her; will you do this?"

"Of course I will, Dick."

"You are going straight home now, aren't you, Tom?"

"I don't know whether to or not."

"You had better. If you stay here you may get into trouble with those redcoats who are watching the house."

"Oh, I hardly think so."

"Well, I would rather that you should go home now, Tom, for I should hate it very much if you should get into trouble. I shall feel much better if I know you have gone home."

"But when will I see Mr. Lyman's folks?"

"You can come back some time to-morrow, and by that time the redcoats will be gone."

"All right; I guess that will be the best thing for me to do."

"Undoubtedly; and then you can stay and talk to Jennie as long as you like, old man."

"Little good that would do me," said Tom; and there was a bitterness in the tone that was noticed by Dick.

"Hello!" he said. "What's the matter? I was surprised that you and Jennie were sweethearts, Tom."

"No."

"You are not?"

"No; we would be, if I had my way about it, but Jennie won't have it that way."

There was a sad cadence to the youth's voice that touched Dick and aroused his sympathy. "What is trouble?" he asked. "Surely she likes you. I don't know how she could help it."

"Oh, she likes me very well," was the reply, "but I'm not well enough to be my sweetheart."

"How do you know, Tom? Perhaps you are mistaken."

"No mistake about it. I asked her, a couple of weeks ago, and she said that she didn't care enough for me to want to marry me."

"Well, I wouldn't take 'no' for an answer, Tom," said Dick, shaking the youth's hand. "Stick to her. Don't give up. She'll change her mind one of these days."

"I'm afraid not, Dick. Somehow I think that—she—she likes—you!"

"Me!" Dick was greatly surprised.

"Yes."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because she was so eager to have me try to rescue you. She seemed wild to have me do it."

Dick was silent for a few moments, and then he said, "I hope you are wrong, Tom. I hope so for her and yours—for it would be bad for her to like me. See, I have a sweetheart, Tom, and—"

"Have you, truly?" exclaimed Tom. There was light in his tones.

"I have, old man; and, you see, it would be bad

Jennie to take a notion to me. I don't think she has done so, however, and I am sure that if you will keep at her she will sooner or later capitulate. Don't give up, Tom; keep after her. Be brave."

"I will, Dick; now that I know you don't want her, and won't try to get her. I shall go in and win her if I can."

"Do so. I think you will succeed. You certainly have my best wishes for your success. By the way, it might not be a bad idea for you to let drop the statement that I told you I had a sweetheart, Tom, the next time you are with Jennie—you understand?"

"Yes; and I'll do it, Dick. Thanks for the hint."

"That's all right; good-by, old man!"

"Good-by; and success to you, Dick."

The two shook hands, and then Dick moved away, leading his horse after him, while Tom started toward his home.

It was Dick's intention to walk and lead his horse till he reached the highway, and he had gone perhaps half a mile when he found himself suddenly confronted by a man who barred his way, with the exclamation: "Hol' on, my young friend! Don' be in sech er hurry!"

The light from the moon did not penetrate through the foliage of the trees very well, and it was hard to see just what sort of looking fellow the man was, but Dick had a remarkable memory for voices, and he was sure he recognized the man's voice.

"So it is you, Long Lige, is it?" he exclaimed, and here was a note of satisfaction in his voice.

"Yes, et's me, Long Lige," was the reply; "an' now, I'd like ter know whar ye air goin' so fast?"

"I haven't been going very fast."

"No; but ye soon would hev be'n."

"You are right about that."

"But now ye won't go nowhars."

"I won't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Cause I won't let ye."

"Oh, you won't let me, eh?"

"Thet's what I said."

"Oh, it is?" Dick spoke ironically.

"Yas, et is!"

"Well, now, permit me to tell you something, Mr. Long Lige. It is this: That you can't keep me from going where I like!"

"Whut's that!" in a surprised voice. "I kain't keep ye im goin' whar ye like?"

"No."

"Waal, say, young feller, ye air kinder sassy, hain't ye?"

"I am going to be a good deal more than saucy, Long Lige."

"Whut d'ye mean?"

"Let me see," said Dick, in a reflective tone, "I believe that you are the fellow who caused me to be captured by the redcoats yesterday afternoon by shooting me when they were chasing me. Is that right?"

"Thet's right, young feller. I creased ye, an' ef I do say et myself, et wuz er mighty good shot!"

"Yes; but it was an accidental shot."

"A axident, ye say?"

"Yes; you couldn't do it again in a hundred years."

"Ye think not?"

"I am sure of it."

"Waal, that shows that ye don' know me, young feller. I'm er dead shot, I am, and I kin do that trick two times outer three."

"Bah! you are a big braggart!"

"Whut's that!" almost howled the astonished hunter. "Ye dar' ter call me names?"

"I'm going to do more than call you names; I'm going to give you a good thrashing!"

"Whut's that?—ye goin' ter giv' me er thrashing? Wy', sonny, ye couldn't lick me with a axe!"

"I can do it with my bare hands, and I'm going to prove it to you!"

"Oh, ye air?"

"Yes; you gave me a sore head yesterday, and now I'm going to give you one to even up the score."

"I'd like ter see ye do et!"

"All right; you shall be accommodated. Are you ready?"

"Am I reddy? Waal, I jes' guess ez how't I am reddy! Sail in, young feller, w'enever ye git reddy, an' I'll give ye er good lickin' an' then take ye an' turn ye over ter the British at ther Hook."

"I don't think you will do anything of the kind. Now, look out for yourself. I'm coming for you!"

"Come erhead!"

Dick obeyed. He had made up his mind to get even with the hunter for having caused his capture by the redcoats the evening before, and he thought that to give the fellow a thrashing would be about the best way of doing it. So he leaped forward and attacked Long Lige.

Evidently the hunter thought he would have an easy time handling Dick, but he soon found that he had miscalculated. The youth would not permit the fellow to get hold of him and began pummeling him in fine style. The man had no idea of fisticuff fighting whatever, and he was dealt blow after blow by Dick, who was expert at

this kind of work. Long Lige quickly became angry, and giving utterance to threats and oaths, tried to close with his opponent. This, of course, Dick would not permit, and he kept on thumping the fellow until he saw a good chance, and then he delivered a blow that knocked Long Lige down.

The hunter lay where he had fallen for a few moments. His head had struck against a tree, and he was somewhat dazed. There is little doubt but that he saw a number of stars that he had never before known were in the sky.

"Get up," said Dick, coolly; "get up and I will knock you down again!"

Long Lige heard the words and understood them, in a hazy way; and presently he struggled to his feet. Hardly had he got straightened up before Dick dealt him a severe blow, and down he dropped, like a log. He was tough, however, and was not yet insensible.

"How do you like it as far as you have gone?" asked Dick, calmly.

"Cuss ye! I'll hev yer life fur thus!" the fallen man growled. "Ye'll hev ter look out. I'm goin' ter kill ye!"

"I am not at all alarmed, Lige," was the cool reply. "And if you know when you are well off you will not make any attempts against my life, for I might take it into my head to return the compliment; in which event it would be all up with you!"

Long Lige replied with a growl, and then after a few moments he scrambled slowly to his feet. He attempted to draw a knife which was in his belt, but did not have time. Dick leaped forward and dealt him a terrible blow, which dropped him as if he had been shot, and this time he was insensible.

"There; I guess I am about even with you!" murmured Dick as he gazed down at the insensible man. "I hope it will teach you a lesson—though I doubt it very much; for such brutes learn but slowly. Well, we'll move onward now."

Dick started onward, leading his horse, and ten minutes later emerged from the timber into a road which led toward the north.

"Now I will move more lively," the youth said to himself, and he leaped into the saddle. He urged the horse into a gallop and rode onward at this pace for an hour. He rode steadily until an hour after sunrise, and then stopped at a house and asked if he could have breakfast and feed for the horse. The man of the house said that he might, so Dick leaped down. A boy took the horse to the stable, while Dick entered the house in company with the man.

people of the house to be pleasant and agreeable. They did not ask the youth any questions outright, but it was plain that they were curious regarding him. He could not make up his mind, from their conversation, whether they were Whigs or Tories, and so was very cautious in his talk. It would not do to give any information to people in sympathy with the king.

The man of the house tried to draw Dick out, two or three times, but failed; and finally desisted, much to the youth's satisfaction. When the meal was ended Dick offered to pay for it and for the feed for his horse, but the man refused to accept payment.

"I hope that I am not so inhospitable," he said; "you are welcome."

Dick thanked the man and was just thinking of going out and starting on his journey when the man gave a sudden start and looked through the window with an eager expression on his face.

"I hope you are a loyal king's man," he said, turning to Dick and eyeing him searchingly; "if you are not may go hard with you, for there is a party of British soldiers at the gate!"

Dick looked through the window and saw that the man spoke truly. There was a party of soldiers to the number of twenty, at least, out in front, and they were just starting to enter the yard.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK ENCOUNTERS SOME REDCOATS.

Dick hardly knew what to say or do. He had no desire to meet the redcoats, and was afraid that if he went to do so he might get into trouble; while to try to avoid meeting them would arouse suspicion and make trouble absolute certainty.

"I'm a loyal king's man," said Dick; "but I am afraid they might not believe it, and in that case they would try to detain me. Now, it happens that I am bound across the river a ways, on an important matter, and it would not do for me to be delayed; so I think it will be best for me to go at once. Kindly refrain from speaking to me and I will go out and get my horse and go quite away, while you are entertaining them."

The man hesitated and looked at Dick as if he would tell the truth or falsity of his statement in his eyes, but Dick bore the scrutiny unflinchingly. Then, as a gesture showed that the redcoats were half way to the house.

Dick enjoyed a very good breakfast, and found the

med away and started toward the rear door of the kitchen.

"Don't tell them about me," he said; and then before he man could make up his mind what to do the youth had passed out of the house.

Dick was afraid the man would tell the redcoats about him, and he hastened to the stable; and, entering, bridled his horse—the saddle had not been removed—and led him out. He knew it would not do to lose any time, so he leaped into the saddle and rode toward the road. In reaching it he had to pass the house, and just as he was passing it the redcoats came pouring out, like bees out of a hive.

"Hold on, there! Hold on, I say!" cried the leader of the redcoats.

Dick was tempted to make a dash for it, but on second thought decided it would not be wise to do so. He believed he could deceive the redcoats and thus get away without having to run the gantlet of a shower of bullets.

"What do you wish, sir?" he asked, reining up his horse.

"I want to have a little talk with you."

"Very well; but hurry, as I have no time to lose."

"Oh, you haven't, eh?"

"No, sir." Dick spoke boldly and firmly.

"Perhaps you may be forced to spare considerable time."

This was said in a significant and somewhat threatening tone.

"I think not, sir. And if you delay me I shall report the matter to General Clinton."

"Oho! Who are you that talks so boldly?"

"I am a British soldier like yourself, and am now acting as a messenger, and am on my way from New York to Stony Point."

"Indeed?" The officer seemed somewhat taken aback. He eyed the youth somewhat dubiously. It was evident he was puzzled; that he did not know what to say do. Finally he said:

"What is your name?"

"Henry Morrow."

"Henry Morrow, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you are from New York, you say?"
"I am."

"Taking a message to General Clinton?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Let me see the document and I will let you go."

"I have no document."

"Eh? You have no document?"

"No."

"But you just said you were the bearer of a message to General Clinton."

"And so I am."

"Then where is the document?"

"I have just told you that I have none."

"Then what do you mean by saying you are the bearer of a message, when you have none?"

"I have a message to deliver to General Clinton, just as I said, but I have no document on my person. The message is an oral one."

"Oh!"

"You see, this is a dangerous region for British messengers to be traveling through, and it was thought best not to risk carrying any documents on me, so I have an oral message, and, of course, I cannot show you that."

"No, I suppose not."

It was evident that the officer was puzzled, and hardly knew what action to take under the circumstances. Dick felt sure that he was suspected of being a patriot spy, but he had talked so boldly, and claimed, with such confidence, that he was a messenger to Clinton, that the officer was afraid to make a prisoner of him for fear he might be what he represented himself to be, in which case the officer would come in for a severe reprimand from the commander-in-chief of the British army. Dick understood the situation, and decided to take the bull by the horns, so to speak.

"Well, I must be going," he said, coolly; "I have lost too much time already. Good-day, sir!" He started to ride away, but the officer told him to stop.

"Wait a bit," he said; "don't be in such a hurry."

"But I am in a hurry," said Dick; "I was instructed to get to General Clinton as quickly as possible, and I don't think that he will be pleased when he learns how one of his own officers delayed me."

"That is all right," was the reply; "I am sorry if I am causing delay where I should not, but at the same time you will understand that there is a possibility that you are not what you claim to be. You may be a rebel spy, for all I know."

"Oh, yes; perhaps I am George Washington himself!" said Dick, ironically.

"No, I know you are not Washington," replied the officer, taking Dick's remark seriously; "you are not old enough to be him; but it is possible that you are a rebel spy, and I must be satisfied that you are not one before I can let you go. I shall search you, and if I

do not find anything to indicate that you have told a falsehood you will be allowed to go on your way."

"Oh, but see here; I haven't any time to lose in foolishness!" protested Dick. "I must be going, and at once."

"Not until after you have been searched; Tom, look through his pockets," addressing a soldier.

Dick realized that it would not do to let himself be searched. In one of his pockets was a letter from his sweetheart, Alice Estabrook, and it was addressed to "Dick Slater." This would be sure to result in his arrest, for the redcoats had all heard of Dick Slater and of "The Liberty Boys of '76," and they would jump at the chance to make a prisoner of him. There was a reward of five hundred pounds offered for his capture, and there was little doubt that the soldiers would be glad of a chance to get the prize-money.

All this flashed through Dick's mind while the soldier was taking three steps toward him, and he made up his mind in an instant. He must get away from there, come what would. He might be able to escape; and, anyway, it would be much better to die trying to escape than to allow himself to be captured without a struggle, when he would be sure to be shot or hung afterward.

Having decided, Dick was prompt to act. The redcoats, confident in their numbers, did not seem to think there was any danger that the youth would attempt flight, and had not surrounded him. Perhaps the majority believed that he was a British messenger, as he said; at any rate, there was no one in his way and the first thing the redcoats knew the young stranger was dashing away at the best speed of his horse.

Straight toward the yard fence went Dick, and his horse leaped it without any trouble, and the next instant was dashing up the road.

It had been done so quickly that the officer and his men had been taken wholly by surprise, and could only stare stupidly; now, however, they woke up and the officer yelled for them to mount and follow the fugitive.

"We must catch and search him!" he cried. "I believe he is a rebel spy!"

The men ran out of the yard and quickly mounted and started in pursuit of Dick. They yelled for him to stop, but of course he didn't do it. He had secured a good start, and did not believe the redcoats could catch him.

"I have a good horse," he thought, "and I don't think they have any that can overtake him."

He kept watch over his shoulder, and was pleased to see that his pursuers were not gaining. Indeed, the majority were losing ground and were falling back; only

two or three were holding their own, and they with seeing difficulty.

"I guess I am safe enough," the youth said to himself with a feeling of satisfaction. "They can't catch me."

Then as he turned his head and looked ahead a look of dismay escaped him. He had just rounded a bend in the road and in front of him, coming to meet him, was another party of redcoats!"

CHAPTER IX.

TOM HAS HOPES.

Dick was a resourceful youth, however, and he made up his mind to try to fool the redcoats. "There are only about a dozen of them," he thought, "and I can't fool them, I'll fight them!"

The redcoats saw Dick coming toward them as fast as his horse could run, and they halted and drew pistols. As soon as he was near enough so that he could see himself understood, Dick called out:

"The rebels are after me! Let me pass! Be ready to hold them at bay! I am a messenger to Clinton!"

This deceived the redcoats, and they opened up fire to let Dick pass through, and turned their attention to the bend, around which, just at this moment, dashed another party of redcoats.

The instant the second party of redcoats caught sight of the red coats of the first, they realized that they had been tricked, and a wild yell of anger and disgust went up from them. They whirled in their saddles and fired a volley after the fugitive, but without effect, seeing that they whirled their horses and set out in pursuit.

Their horses were no swifter than those ridden by the members of the other party, however, and they could not gain on the fugitive; in fact, he kept drawing away from them and increasing the distance between.

Dick was watching affairs closely, and felt very satisfied. "Now, if I don't meet any more parties of redcoats I shall be all right," he said to himself.

It proved to be as he thought. He gradually drew away from his pursuers, and finally was out of sight entirely. He did not meet any more parties of redcoats, so was not bothered in this respect, and when he was not bothered in any way any more that day, the pursuing redcoats gave up the pursuit, presently, as Dick saw when looking back from the top of a big hill. At so there was nothing further to fear from them.

Dick reached West Point in safety, about three o'clock in the afternoon, and as soon as he had greeted his "Liberty Boys," went to headquarters and was ushered into the presence of General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental army.

The great man greeted Dick pleasantly, and asked him what he had learned down at Paulus Hook. Dick told him briefly and clearly as possible, and after a few minutes silence, during which time the commander-in-chief seemed to be pondering deeply, he looked up and said: "You say there are five hundred men in the garrison of the Hook?"

"Yes, your excellency."

Again there was a silence of a minute, and then the commander-in-chief asked: "What do you think about it, Dick? Is it possible to surprise the garrison and capture it?"

Dick studied a few moments, and then replied: "I could say so, your excellency."

"On what do you base your belief in the possibility of such an attempt being successful?"

"Well, for one thing, the carelessness of the garrison."

"Ah!"

"They are so close to New York that they do not seem to think there is any danger at all of their being attacked, and they keep only one sentinel out. This sentinel could easily be overcome, and the garrison surprised, at least, that is the way it seems to me."

That agrees with the views of Major Lee," said Washington, as if half to himself; "he thinks it is possible to recapture the garrison on Paulus Hook, and wants to make the attempt."

I think it could be successfully done, sir."

You were within the works, you say?"

Yes, your excellency."

Can you draw a plan of the works?"

Yes, sir."

Sit down at the table there and do so."

Dick took the seat as directed, and while the commander-in-chief walked the floor, his hands behind his head, his eyes on the floor, the youth made a good pencil drawing of the fort on Paulus Hook. When he finished he rose.

There, your excellency, I think that is correct in every way," he said.

Washington seated himself and took a look at the drawing. At last he nodded his head as if satisfied, and then, looking at Dick, said: "You may go now, my boy. I am obliged for what you have done. It will make the

matter of the capture of the garrison on the Hook much more simple than it would otherwise have been."

"I am glad if you are satisfied," replied Dick; then he saluted and withdrew.

As soon as Dick was gone General Washington called his orderly and told him to tell Major Henry Lee to report to headquarters.

The orderly saluted and withdrew, and fifteen minutes later returned and announced, "Major Lee."

"Ah, Major, I am glad to see you," the commander-in-chief said, shaking the hand of the young officer, who flushed with pleasure. Major Lee was a young man of perhaps twenty-four years, and was handsome and manly looking. He was a brave man, and a good soldier.

When the major had seated himself he looked inquiringly at the commander-in-chief, who was seated at his table, looking thoughtfully at the drawing which Dick had made of the fort on Paulus Hook.

"Major," said the general, presently, "I have sent for you to talk of that matter of which you spoke to me a week ago—the affair of trying to capture the British garrison on Paulus Hook."

Major Lee's face lighted up on the instant. "Yes?" he remarked, inquiringly and eagerly.

"You are aware, Major, that I sent Dick Slater down to do some spy work at the Hook," went on the commander-in-chief; "well, he has returned and brings a good report. He was within the works of the British, and, disguised as a girl fruit peddler, was enabled to see everything and learn the number of men there, and, in fact, all that it was necessary that we should know. He was just here, and I had him make a drawing of the fort. Here it is;" and he handed the drawing to the Major, who took it and looked at it with interest.

"That is all right," said the Major, as he handed the drawing back, "I think that there will be little difficulty in surprising and capturing the garrison."

The commander-in-chief nodded. "I am inclined to think it can be successfully accomplished," he said; "and so I have made up my mind to let you make the attempt."

"Thank you, thank you, your excellency!" It was evident that the young officer was delighted.

"How many men will you wish to take with you, Major?"

"I hardly know. I do not think we will need as many men as there are in the garrison, for we will take them by surprise, and they will not be able to make much of a fight."

"That is the way I look at it. I should judge that three hundred men will be plenty."

"I think so, your excellency."

"Very well; let it be understood that you are to take that number of men. And now, when do you wish to make the attempt?"

"The sooner the better, sir."

"I judge so. Well, you have my permission to go ahead with the matter at your own pleasure."

"Thank you; and I suppose I may select my men?"

"Yes; take whom you please."

"Very well; then among those whom I shall select will be Dick Slater and his company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

The commander-in-chief nodded in approval. "That is a good idea," he said; "they are as brave as lions and are shrewd and careful also; and then, Dick knows the ground thoroughly, and it would be almost necessary for you to take him, at any rate."

"So I think; and I might as well take his men, for, as you say, they have no superiors in any respect, and not many equals."

"You are right; well, go ahead in your own way, only come and report to me before you start on the expedition."

"I will do so, your excellency." Then Major Lee saluted and withdrew.

He began work at once, for he was eager to get to work on the task of capturing the British garrison on Paulus Hook, and when it was known what he intended doing there were twice as many men who wanted to go with him as he wished to take. He made his selections, and when Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys" were picked out, they were delighted.

"That is the kind of work I like!" declared Bob Estabrook, who was a lively youth and always ready for anything that might come along.

The others all said the same, and they began making preparations for the affair at once. Major Lee hastened the work, and it was decided to start that night. This was done, and about ten o'clock the party of three hundred rode away, toward the south.

Tom Barnes, after he parted from Dick that night near the Lyman home, walked toward his own home and really intended to go there; but before he had gone far he paused and stood, hesitating.

"No, I won't go home," he murmured, finally; "there is no telling what those scoundrelly redcoats might take it into their heads to do, and I will stay here and keep watch of them; and if they try any funny tricks I will pitch in and do them all the harm I can. Then I'll be here to see Jennie and the rest of the folks, and give them Dick's message as soon as the redcoats have gone

away—which will be soon after daylight, no doubt, as there would be no reason for them to stay, then."

Tom made his way back and took up his position behind the stable, where he could see what was going on. He remained there a couple of hours, and then, becoming weary, and the redcoats showing no signs of trying to bother the Lymans, he entered the stable and climbed up into the haymow. Here he took up a position near the front wall where he could peep through between the logs, and lay there and took it easy. He had not intended to go to sleep, but his easy position had considerable effect, and before he realized that he was even sleepy he dropped asleep and slept soundly till morning.

When he awoke he peered out through the crack and was relieved when he found that he could see nothing of any of the redcoats. "Jove! I hope they have gone!" he murmured.

Just then he saw Mr. Lyman emerge from the house and come toward the stable, and he hastened to climb down out of the haymow. He met the man at the stable door and surprised him.

"Hello, Tom! You here?" exclaimed Mr. Lyman.

"Yes," with a smile, "I'm here."

Mr. Lyman glanced around questioningly. "Where is Dick Slater?" he asked. "Didn't you succeed in rescuing him, after all?"

"Yes, we rescued him."

"Who do you mean by 'we'?"

"I got the old fisherman, Joe Hobbs, to help me, and we rescued Dick."

"Where is he now?"

"He went away."

"Went away?"

"Yes; we came here, after we got away from the British, but found some redcoats on guard over your house; so, knowing we could not see you folks before today, Dick told me to give you his regards and thanks for what you have done for him, and he mounted his horse and started back to West Point. He said he had some important information which should be taken to General Washington at the earliest possible moment."

"I know; well, I'm glad that you succeeded in rescuing him, and that he got away from here in safety."

"Have the redcoats gone?" asked Tom.

"Yes, they went an hour ago."

"Jove! I was asleep in the haymow. If they had taken it into their heads to search up there they would have captured me, sure."

"They would, for a fact. They didn't seem to think that it was necessary to look anywhere but in the house."

"I wonder if they'll come back?"

"I hardly think so. They talked as if they thought it no use to watch around here."

"You don't suppose they left some one to watch the house, do you?"

"I hardly think so."

"Then I guess I will go to the house and see Jennie and her mother."

"Do so, Tom. Breakfast is almost ready, and they will lay a plate for you."

"That will suit me, first rate, for I am hungry as a bear."

Then Tom made his way to the house and entered. He took Mrs. Lyman and Jennie by surprise, and they greeted him pleasantly, and Jennie asked eagerly whether or not he had succeeded in rescuing Dick Slater from the hands of the British. Tom told her that he had done so, and related the story of the night's adventures.

Jennie and her mother were delighted, but expressed sorrow at not having got to see Dick again before he went away. Jennie, especially, seemed somewhat cast down, and disappointed, observing which, Tom's heart sank. He thought of the fact that Dick had a sweetheart, however, and felt better. He decided to do as Dick had told him to do, and with an attempt at acting, that it is doubtful whether or not it deceived the observers, he said:

"I am awfully glad I was successful in rescuing Dick Slater, on account of his sweetheart. Just think how she would have suffered if Dick had——"

"What are you talking about, Tom Barnes?" asked Jennie, with flushed face. "What do you know about Dick Slater's sweetheart?"

"Oh, nothing; only what he told me," Tom innocently replied.

"And what did he tell you?" Jennie spoke imperiously.

"Why, nothing; only that he was thankful to me—and to you, too, Jennie, and to all of you—for rescuing him, as he knew it would have killed his sweetheart if he had been shot or hung by the redcoats."

There was silence for a few moments, during which time Jennie studied Tom's face closely, and then she said: "Did Dick Slater tell you that, Tom?"

"Why, yes," replied Tom, as if surprised that the girl could doubt it.

"Did he say who his sweetheart was?"

"No, he didn't say who she was; but he said that she lives over across the river in New York."

Mrs. Lyman, with very good judgment, suddenly re-

membered that she had some business to attend to out of doors, and left Tom and Jennie together.

"So Dick Slater has a sweetheart, has he?" remarked Jennie, seemingly more to herself than to Tom, but he took upon himself to reply.

"Yes, Jennie," he said; "and I wish I had a sweetheart."

He took a step toward the girl as he spoke, and she eyed him searchingly for a few moments and seemed to be hesitating; then she suddenly surprised the young man by leaping into his arms.

"You shall have a sweetheart, Tom!" she cried. "You know, I told you a couple of weeks ago that I didn't love you, and I don't think I do; but I believe that I can soon learn to love a fellow who is brave enough to go right into the British encampment and rescue a prisoner right out from under their very noses!"

"Oh, Jennie—sweetheart!" exclaimed Tom, in an ecstasy of delight, and he gave the girl a hug and a kiss that made her flush up like a peony.

"Who said you could do that, Mr. Impudence?" she asked, in mock anger; and jerking away from him she gave him a playful cuff on the ear. Tom only laughed, however; he was supremely happy, and wouldn't have felt it if he had been hit with a club.

Just then Mr. and Mrs. Lyman entered, and when the woman saw the radiantly happy face of the young man, a pleased look came into her eyes. "I believe it is going to be all right between them, after all," she said to herself; "well, I'm glad of it, for Tom is a fine young fellow."

They sat up to the table and ate breakfast, and Tom told the details of his adventures of the night before while rescuing Dick Slater. He made light of his own doings, like the brave and modest fellow he was, and this made Jennie think all the more of him. In truth, she began to think, now, that Tom was the handsomest and bravest fellow she had ever seen. "I believe I can learn to—to love him after a while," she thought.

It was hard work for Tom to make up his mind to go home, and he remained and talked to Jennie as long as he could, then finally took his departure most reluctantly.

"What made Tom look so happy this morning, Jennie?" asked Mrs. Lyman, with a sly glance at her daughter.

"I don't know, mother," with a blush; "did he look more happy than usual?"

"I should say so! Why, he looked like he was perfectly happy."

"Maybe he was, mother," was Jennie's demure reply.

CHAPTER X.

A DARING STROKE.

The party of patriot soldiers under Major Lee rode southward rapidly and steadily, and stopping only an hour in the morning to eat their scanty lunch and let their horses graze and rest, reached the vicinity of Paulus Hook about noon. Acting on Dick's suggestion, they left the main road and entered the timber, where they went into camp to await the coming of night.

Dick took leave of the party, and made his way to the home of the Lymans, which was scarcely more than a mile distant. He was greeted pleasantly by Mr. and Mrs. Lyman, but he fancied that Jennie was rather cool. He could not understand it at first, but presently Tom Barnes put in an appearance, and when Dick saw how pleasantly Jennie greeted him, and how happy Tom looked, he thought he understood the matter. When Jennie put herself out to be pleasant to Tom, and paid scarcely any attention to Dick at all, the youth was sure he understood the matter, and he was glad.

"Tom will make her a good husband," Dick thought; "and she will soon learn to love him if she doesn't already."

Dick explained his presence there, and when the others learned that an attempt was to be made to capture the garrison on the Hook, they were well pleased.

"Oh, I hope you will succeed!" cried Mrs. Lyman.

"And so do I," said her husband.

Tom and Jennie both expressed themselves to the same effect.

"I hope we will succeed," said Dick; "and I rather think that we will."

"Say, Dick, let me be in the party," said Tom.

Dick looked at Jennie to see what she thought about the matter, and saw that the idea startled her a bit. He was glad of this, as to his mind it was proof that she liked Tom.

"You might get killed, Tom!" she said. "You are not a soldier, and I don't think you are called upon to go and risk your life, do you, Mr. Slater?" When Dick was there before she had called him "Dick."

"No, he isn't called upon to go into the affair, at all, Miss Jennie," replied Dick; "he has done enough in having rescued me from the British, and there is no necessity of his risking his life in an affair of this kind."

"I know, but I want to go with you," said Tom; "I should enjoy it very much."

"Well, so far as I am concerned, I shall be glad to have you with us," said Dick.

"Then it is settled!" cried Tom, with delight.

After a while Dick bade the Lymans and Tom good-by, and took his departure, Tom promising to join them, where they were in camp, soon after nightfall. He wished to be with Jennie as long as possible, of course.

Dick put in the rest of the afternoon scouting in the vicinity of the Hook, and everything seemed quiet there.

"I don't think they have the least suspicion that they are in danger of being attacked," he said to himself; "that will make it easier for us to surprise them."

About six o'clock that evening he saw a foraging party leave the Hook and ride away; and this gave him an idea. If the party could be captured, and there was no reason why this could not be done, then it would be possible to play a trick on the redcoats. "We could don the uniforms of the British and take the lead, when we make the attack on the Hook," thought Dick; "the sentinels would think we were the members of the foraging party, and we could get into the works without firing a gun!"

It was a scheme well worth trying, and Dick hastened to the encampment, and, securing permission from Major Lee, took his "Liberty Boys" and set out on the track of the foraging party of redcoats. The youths rode rapidly, and, by inquiring at two or three places, succeeded in following their intended prey.

Two hours later they came up with the redcoats, who had stopped at the home of a patriot, and were helping themselves to such articles of adornment and others things as their fancy dictated. There were only about twenty men in the party, and when they found themselves surrounded by five times their number they wisely decided to surrender.

They were crestfallen, however, for they had not expected anything of the kind; and had had no suspicion that there were any patriot soldiers in that part of the country. Dick did not lose any time, but proceeded to bind the arms of the prisoners, after which they were assisted to mount their horses and the entire party set out on its return to the patriot encampment.

When they reached there, and Major Lee saw that Dick and his "Liberty Boys" had been successful, he was delighted.

"This is all right," he said; "now we can don the uniforms of the redcoats and their comrades at the Hook will think it is them who are coming, and this will enable us to get within the works without difficulty."

"Yes, it will make it easy for us," agreed Dick.

The redcoats, who heard what was said, groaned. It was evident that they did not fancy the way things had gone.

Major Lee waited till ten o'clock, and then twenty of his men garbed themselves in the uniforms of the twenty captured redcoats, and the entire force—with the exception of half a dozen who were left to guard the prisoners—set out for the Hook. Tom Barnes had joined the party and rode beside Dick.

When they reached the hill, from the summit of which they could look down upon the Hook, the men dressed as redcoats took the lead and rode boldly down toward the drawbridge. The rest of the force stopped and waited, ready to dash forward the instant the bridge was down.

The sentinels, as it had been figured they would do, thought the party approaching was their own comrades, and lowered the drawbridge; nor did they learn their mistake until the newcomers had ridden across the bridge and leaped down and seized them and made prisoners of them.

Then Major Lee, Dick Slater and the entire force galloped down the slope, and, dismounting, rushed across the drawbridge and on into the works. They clambered over the intrenchments, and were upon the surprised redcoats almost before they realized that they were in danger.

They tried to offer battle, but only a few succeeded in getting hold of their muskets and firing before they were overpowered. But some of the cooler-headed ones rushed to where the cannon were and fired some shots, which were speedily answered from the New York side, and from ships near at hand in the bay and river.

"We will have to hasten our work or we will be in trouble!" said Major Lee to Dick, and they encouraged their men to work rapidly. The men did so, and kept the main body of the redcoats so busy that they could not do much in the way of firing. A number of prisoners had been taken, when it was discovered that a number of boats, filled with soldiers from the ships, were at hand; and then Major Lee gave the order to retreat.

The men obeyed promptly, and retreated in good order, taking the prisoners with them; and the Major and Dick were the last to leave the British works. They brought up the rear, and were the last to mount their horses and ride away. By this time the redcoats were wide awake, and were hastening after the daring patriots with the intention of trying to get even with them.

Major Lee and Dick leaped into their saddles and galloped after their men. "That was a daring stroke, Dick!" he Major said.

"You are right, Major," Dick replied; "it was a daring stroke, and a successful one, too."

It had been a daring stroke, indeed. "Lighthorse Harry"—as he was sometimes called—was wounded by a bullet from a redcoat's musket, but Dick caught hold of him and kept him from falling from his horse.

"Are you severely wounded?" asked Dick anxiously.

"No, I think not, Dick," was the reply; "it shocked me at the instant, but I don't think it is very serious."

Another volley came from the redcoats; but did no further damage, and a few moments later the two were over the brow of the hill and out of danger.

The entire party made its way back to the encampment, and Dick hastened to examine Major Lee's wound. It was painful, but was not serious, and Dick dressed it skillfully.

Then an account was taken of the prisoners who had been captured. It was found that 159 redcoats had been brought safely away, and this made 179 in the possession of the patriots, counting the twenty that had already been secured. This was very good, indeed, and the affair could well be considered a success.

"Do you think the redcoats will try to follow us, Dick?" asked Major Lee.

"I don't know, Major," was the reply; "but I think it would be a good idea to start on the return to the highlands at as early a moment as possible."

"I think so, too, and will give the order to get ready for the journey."

He did so, and the men began making their preparations to start. At Dick's suggestion the men under the Major started first, with the prisoners, while Dick and his "Liberty Boys" remained behind to cover the retreat.

The redcoats did follow, sure enough, and were taken by surprise by Dick and his youths, who opened fire upon them and sent them scurrying back to get under cover.

This pleased the youths mightily, and they gave utterance to their battle cry of, "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" Then they gave utterance to cheers and cries of defiance.

The redcoats were angry, and began moving forward, taking advantage of the protection afforded by the trees, and the "Liberty Boys" were forced to fall back gradually. As this was what they wished to do, anyway, however, it did not matter.

Shots were exchanged for two hours, during which time the "Liberty Boys" had fallen back about a mile, and then the redcoats came to a stop. They had doubtless made up their minds that it would be useless to try to overcome the patriots and rescue their comrades.

Tom Barnes had remained with the youths, as he was enthusiastic, and enjoyed the skirmishing; but now he decided that he would return to the home of the Lymans.

"Good-by, Dick," he said, shaking the youth's hand. "I owe you a good deal, old man, for Jennie has promised to be my sweetheart, and that is about the same as promising to be my wife; for she isn't the kind of a girl to flirt with a fellow. She likes me now, I think, and I have hopes that she will learn to love me."

"I am sure that she will, Tom," said Dick; "I am glad, and I think you will win her easily."

"I hope so, and I believe so, too. Well, good-by; and if you ever come down this way you must be sure and hunt me up. I shall always be glad to see you."

"I shall certainly try to see you if I happen along this way, Tom. Good-by."

Tom started back, and by making a detour managed to escape being seen by the redcoats. Three-quarters of an hour later he reached the home of the Lymans and found them up. They had heard the firing and had remained up, purposely, in the hope that Tom would come and tell them whether or not the attack on the garrison at the Hook had been successful.

"It was entirely successful," said Tom; "and we captured more than a third of the redcoats who were at the Hook."

"Good!" exclaimed Jennie. "And I'm so glad you got back in safety, Tom!"

"Are you, really and truly?" asked Tom, his eyes shining.

"Of course I am!"

"Were any of the patriot soldiers killed?" asked Mr. Lyman.

"Two; and three were wounded—but one of these was Major Lee, the commander."

"One of the killed?" asked Mrs. Lyman.

"No; one of those who was wounded."

"Oh! And where are the patriot soldiers now?"

"They are on their way back to West Point, with their prisoners."

"I should have thought the redcoats would have followed and tried to rescue their comrades," said Mr. Lyman.

"So they did, but we fought them back, and they finally gave it up; and then I parted with the 'Liberty Boys' and came here."

"I'm proud of you, Tom!" said Jennie. "You are just as brave as any 'Liberty Boy' that ever lived!"

"I'm not so sure about that," grinned Tom; "but I'm glad to hear you say it, anyway, Jennie."

The patriot soldiers, with their prisoners in their midst,

made their way northward as rapidly as they could, and did not stop until daylight. Then they paused, and a foraging party went out to get food for the men and feed for the horses. The party was gone two hours, but when it came back there was plenty of food for all, and feed for the tired animals, the party having brought a couple of wagon-loads of provisions and feed.

Two hours was a good, long rest, and as soon as all had eaten, the journey was resumed. Another stop was made about two o'clock, and after eating the noonday meal the journey was again resumed, West Point being reached an hour before sunset.

Their coming with the prisoners was the signal for great excitement in the garrison. The soldiers cheered themselves hoarse. Major Lee was not feeling very well, but he went at once to the commander-in-chief's headquarters to report.

"So you succeeded, Major!" exclaimed General Washington, shaking the hand of his under-officer. "I congratulate you! But you look pale. Are you wounded?"

"Got a bullet in the fleshy part of the shoulder—nothing serious," was the careless reply.

"It must be painful, however, and you have aggravated it by the long trip back from the Hook. You should have the surgeon look to it at once."

"Oh, it has been dressed, your excellency. Dick Slater did the work, and he is as skillful as a surgeon, I assure you."

"Well, sit down, Major, and, if it is not too hard on you, tell me the story of your expedition. Of course, I already know that you were successful, but I wish to hear the particulars."

Major Lee took a seat and told the story in detail, the commander-in-chief listening with interest. When the other had finished, General Washington nodded his head.

"You did well; extremely well, Major," he said. "It was a daring stroke, and it will open the eyes of the British and teach them that we are wide awake and ready to strike them at every opportunity."

"So it will, your excellency. I don't think they will be so careless any more."

"You are right; it would be difficult to again strike the garrison on the Hook, but we don't care to strike two blows in the same spot, anyway."

"No, indeed."

"I suppose the 'Liberty Boys' aided you materially in the affair?"

"Yes, your excellency. Whenever there is a daring piece of work to be done, and I am to have anything to do with picking the men, I shall select the 'Liberty Boys.'

You can depend on them to do the work when the time comes."

"I judge you are right about that."

After some further conversation the Major took his leave, and when he was gone the commander-in-chief sent for Dick, who lost no time in reporting at headquarters.

"Well, Dick, I'm glad to see you," the great man said, shaking the youth's hand. "Major Lee has just been here, and he told me the story of the affair in detail. I wish to thank you for the work which was done by you and your brave 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Oh, that is all right, your excellency," said Dick, flushing with pleasure; "we did only our duty."

"Well, it is a credit to a soldier to do his whole duty, my boy; and I must say that I think the success of the expedition was due in a large measure to the work of yourself and your boys. The Major intimated as much, and I think so myself."

"The Major is too modest, your excellency. The credit is due him."

"Well, he thought a part of it was due you, and I think the same; so thank you, as I did him, for the good work which you did."

Dick remained fifteen or twenty minutes, talking with the commander-in-chief, and he was enabled to furnish a few details that had been missed by the Major, so that General Washington had a perfect understanding of the entire affair when Dick finally went back to his quarters.

"What did the commander-in-chief want, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook, when Dick again put in an appearance.

"He asked me a few questions, Bob, and then praised us fellows till I blushed down into my boots."

"Say you so, old man? That is good! I tell you, he knows what's what, the commander-in-chief does! He has had his eye on me for a long time, and I think he intends soon to make a general of me!"

The others laughed. They understood good-natured Bob. He was always making jokes of this kind.

"He did brag us up in fine shape, fellows," said Dick. "He insisted that a good share of the credit for the success of the expedition down at the Hook was due us."

"And as I said a while ago, he knows what's what!" said Bob. "It was a daring stroke, and we were right in it with all our might and main. I tell you, when it comes to that kind of work we are the boys for it!"

"Well, the commander-in-chief has a good opinion of us, anyway," said Dick; "and that is something to be proud of."

THE END.

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